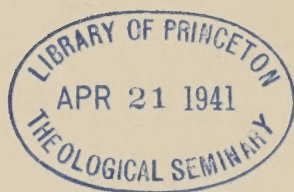


Heralds of  
Christ the King





BX1403

.M39



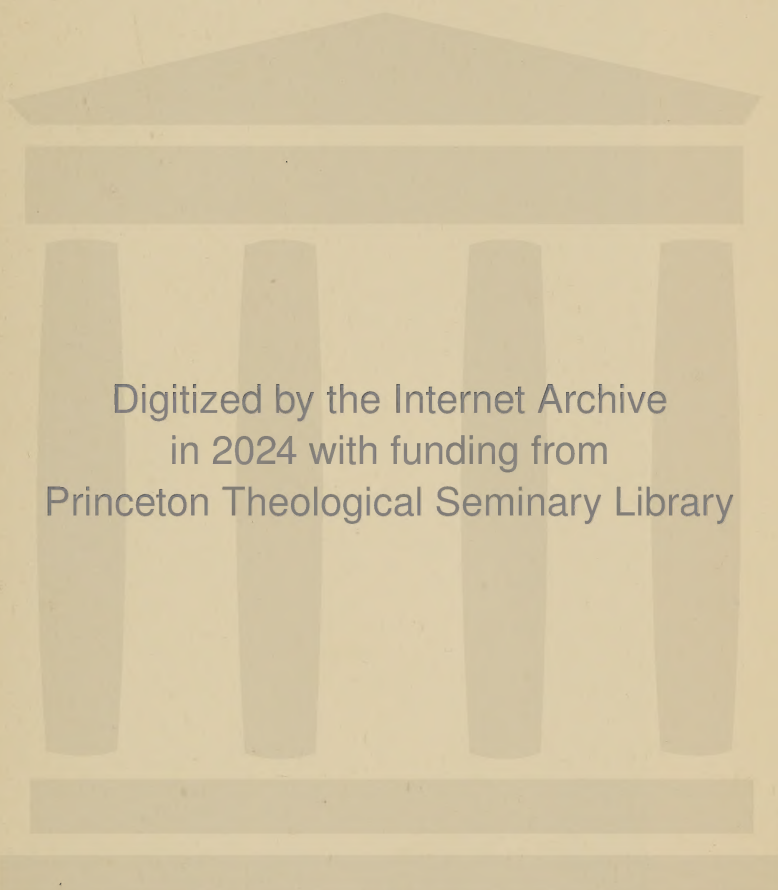




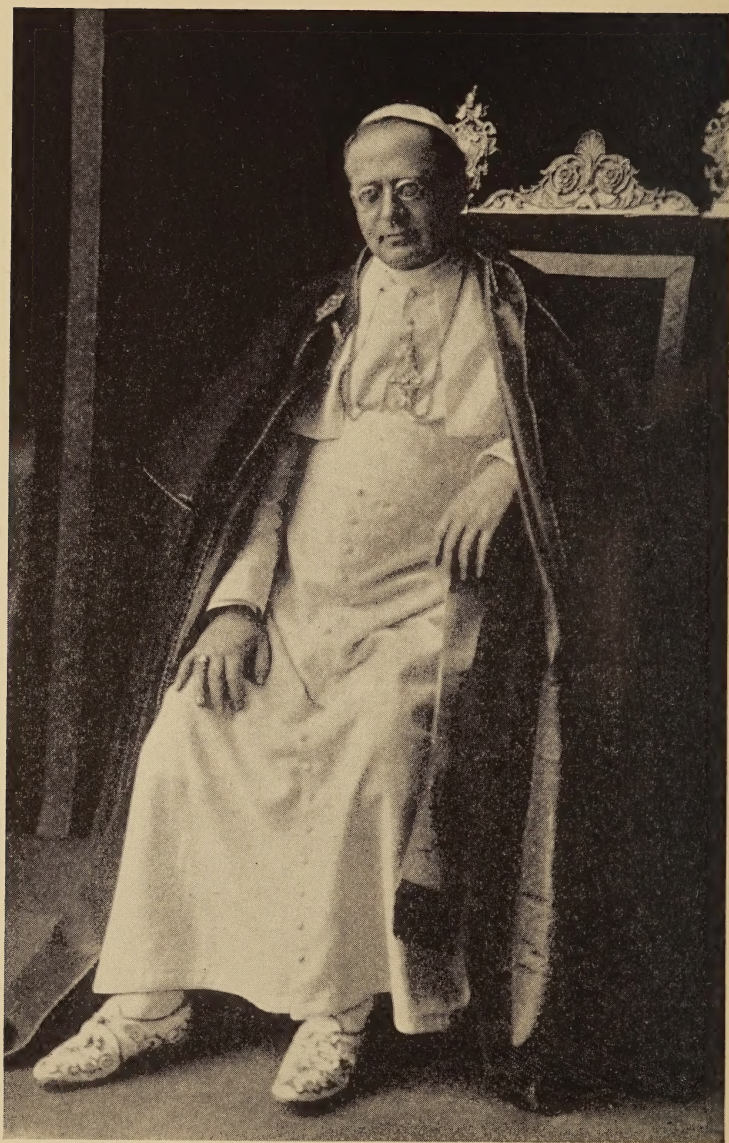
HERALDS OF CHRIST THE KING







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
Princeton Theological Seminary Library



PIUS XI, THE POPE OF THE MISSIONS



# *Heralds Of Christ the King*

---

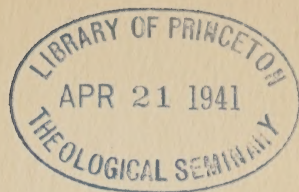
MISSIONARY RECORD OF THE  
NORTH PACIFIC  
1837-1878

BY  
SISTER MARY THEODORE, S.S.A.



---

P. J. KENEDY & SONS  
NEW YORK  
1939



**Nihil Obstat:**

ANSELMUS WOOD  
*Censor Librorum*

**Imprimatur:**

✠ JOANNES C. CODY  
*Episcopus Victoriensis*

25 Novembris 1938

COPYRIGHT, 1939

P. J. KENEDY & SONS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



DEDICATED  
WITH PROFOUND REVERENCE  
AND FILIAL LOVE  
TO  
HIS HOLINESS, PIUS XI  
VICAR OF CHRIST  
AND  
POPE OF THE MISSIONS

## THE SPIRIT SANCTIFIER

A mighty wind doth fill the holy place  
And suddenly there comes in fiery tongue  
The Spirit Sanctifier, Him whose breath  
Doth change from weakness unto strength itself.  
The hush of prayer gives place to sound of praise.  
God's wondrous words are blessed!—New men go forth  
To preach the Christ to those who crucified.

We yearn for Thee, O Paraclete!—do come  
And change our frozen hearts, yea,—set on fire  
With love of Thee!—Transform to valiant souls  
Who fear nor self nor hell, but strong in Thee,  
Go gladly forth to win the world to Christ.

*"Miriam"—S.S.A.*



---

## FOREWORD

---

THE heroic sacrifices made by the Heralds of the Gospel in the country formerly known as Oregon, now comprising the States of Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and the Province of British Columbia, up to the Alaskan boundary, merit a very high place in the annals of Catholic missionary achievement. They deserve to be much better known than they are. As often happens in reference to the scenery of one's country, so also with its early history, strangers come from afar to admire them, while they are taken for granted by their fortunate possessors who gradually lose sight of their cultural and inspirational value.

Pioneer missionary efforts in this North Pacific region were the work of two priests—the apostolic Fathers Blanchet and Demers. Father Blanchet became Archbishop of Oregon and Father Demers Bishop of British Columbia. They labored beyond the ordinary span of life for the conversion of savage Indian tribes scattered over this immense territory, crossing lofty mountains and rivers sometimes so swollen from torrential rains or melting snows that they carried everything before them in their furious course; through interminable forests with their dense foliage reaching so far skyward, that getting direction from the sun was well nigh impossible; ministering at the same time to the few white settlers posted here and there in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company.

An estimate of the dangers encountered, the sacrifices willingly made for the love of souls, the shocking living conditions to be endured when lodged in Indian camps, the courage and piety of these extraordinary missionaries, their persevering efforts to obtain priests, their occasional disappointments when the weaker Indian character fell under the spell of the white man's bad example—all these things are related in Sister Mary Theodore's charming book with a knowledge and a sympathy born of more than sixty years' study and experience in the

very province, and among the descendants of the very people who were the loving objects of Bishop Demers' missionary zeal.

The spread of the faith on the shores of the Pacific has always been a difficult problem, and it has not benefited from the wealth of scenery and climate and natural resources with which Nature has endowed the province. Whereas the Eastern provinces were settled by men and women who left their native lands for freedom's sake—freedom from religious persecution and from crushing land rents, most of those who came here were drawn by the lure of wealth, of pleasure, to make money from our vast resources or to spend money under a climate that promised ease and enjoyment. Against this spirit, missionaries have contended not only with their preaching but also with the example of personal poverty and zeal for the welfare of others; while the part played by the Sisters of St. Ann in combating this spirit of the world in British Columbia and Alaska for the past eighty years, forms one of the most consoling chapters in the annals of missionary endeavor in Canada.

That the loyalty and fervor wafted from every page of this book may help to awaken outside interest in the missions of the Province, and serve also to convince Christians at home of the obligation to maintain and increase the rich inheritance that was won at the cost of so many sacrifices, is the sincere hope of one who lived long enough in the province to be at least dimly aware of its needs.

✠ J. H. MACDONALD

*Archbishop of Edmonton*

*St. Andrew's Day, 1938*

---

## INTRODUCTORY

---

*A Missionary. . . .*

The supreme test of service to which Christ the King can commission those attached to His royal court.

*A Missionary. . . .*

"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."—St. Peter.

*A Missionary. . . .*

"Here am I; speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."—Samuel.

*A Missionary. . . .*

"I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us? And I said: 'Lo, here am I, send me.'"—Isaias.

St. Catherine of Sienna exclaimed: "Would that I were a man that I might go forth and evangelize nations." Yet, what woman in the history of the Catholic Church has done man's part in its cause as did this divinely inspired diplomat, this ambassadress of pagan states, this peace-maker among Italian republics?

*A Missionary . . . A Martyr*

St. Teresa of Spain, a genius among women and a seraph among saints, was once asked whom she esteemed the greater, a missionary or a martyr. In her sprightly manner she at once replied, "A missionary."

This preference for the missionary apostolate of one whose motto was, "To suffer or to die," may be a surprise to many, but a half century of close association with the founders of the Church in British Columbia and Alaska confirms and justifies her choice. First-hand acquaintance teaches, moreover, that missionary life implies martyrdom, not always that of the axe or of the stake, perhaps, but always, always moral martyrdom.

Did not the great exemplar of missionaries, St. Paul, in an excess of moral martyrdom, betray his heart to the Corinthians most piteously: "Tribulation that came to us in Asia, that we were so pressed out of measure above our strength, so that we were weary of life." Weary of life, he the indomitable St. Paul! What



mental agony, what living martyrdom is recorded in the words, "Men destined for death."

The great Apostle of the Gentiles itemizes the harrowing price to be paid for the salvation of souls even to this day: "Hunger, thirst, nakedness, buffetings, no fixed abode, labors, revilings, persecutions." Unwilling to detail further the depths of indignities suffered, he puts them all before us in the significant picture: "We are blasphemed and made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring of all."

But even this is only a part of his agonies. He continues to enumerate nine others which he calls "dangers from without." He had personal experience of every one of them:

"In journeyings often,  
"In perils of rivers,  
"In perils of robbers,  
"In perils from my own nation,  
"In perils from the Gentiles,  
"In perils from the city,  
"In perils in the sea,  
"In perils from false brethren."

And this last peril is assuredly the most pitiful of them all. But if there was perfidy among the first Christians of cultured Greece and Rome, how much more likely that it be found among American Indian neophytes, in whom treachery was a racial trait.

But of all surprises—Holy Writ has preserved the account for the encouragement of the Heralds of the Gospel—the most astonishing is this: the preaching of St. Paul, the greatest of missionaries, was found fault with by the hypocritical Corinthians! Yet his teaching has been the study, the guide and the admiration of Christianity for nineteen centuries, and will continue to be so as long again.

Nor were these criticisms made in secret, since they came to the ears of St. Paul. He repeats the exact words in Chapter X: "For his epistles indeed, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

Contemptible! These Corinthians did not minimize their expressions.

No doubt St. Paul felt the sting of such cutting criticism for he was very human. He owns this himself when he says he went about "in weakness, fear and trembling."

The plain recital of the sufferings of heart, mind and body which runs through the Epistles and the Acts, has not deterred heroic men of God from taking up the work of the first great missionaries and continuing along the cross-strewn road of the apostolate.

"In journeyings often." In this St. Paul has had the greatest number of competitors, especially in North America. How readily would he yield his championship of "journeyings" to him who, if his missionary travels by land and sea, in birch-bark canoes, on snowshoes and by dog-teams were put end to end, would have encircled the globe eight or nine times. Such is the record of Bishop V. J. Grandin, Oblate missionary in the Northwest. Not far behind is the record of Bishop Modeste Demers on the Northwest Pacific Coast.

In fact, the New World has furnished a new quota of dangers and miseries to missionaries. In northwestern Canada and Alaska these hardships and difficulties arise from the rigors of climate, association with primitive and savage races, difficulties of travel, isolation and penury. And yet the succession of priests and bishops who have come forward to carry the knowledge of God to the outermost limits of these regions has never been broken.

Isolation is not the least of the sufferings which mark the missionary apostolate. Reverend Father Althoff, first resident priest in Alaska, was first assigned to a station at Wrangel where he was approximately one thousand miles from a brother priest. The trip by the steamship of 1878 to visit his nearest confrères in Victoria took six days.

Difficulties of travel were allied with the isolation of the missionary. In the earlier days the priests were better acquainted with canoe travel than with transportation by "de luxe" steamers.

Not all canoes are of the beautiful birch-bark design so often seen in colorful pictures. The Northern Alaska and Lower Yukon waters have the one occupant kayak and the similar bidarkie with three circular openings for the travelers. These are made of the skins of seals, sea-lions and walrus. A more roomy kind of canoe, made of moose-skin sewn with sinews and with seams well rubbed with tallow, was used on the Athabasca-MacKenzie rivers. Along the Columbia and the Fraser, where Nature is luxuriant in her giant forest trees, the dugout canoe was most popular. It was popular too in the inlets along the Coast. Whatever the kind, none afforded either restful position for the traveler or shelter from inclement weather on the long journey.

Dog-team travel is for winter and so is snowshoeing. In missionary travel, the two often go together. There is a vast difference, however, between snowshoeing for pleasure and snowshoeing in quest of souls in the far Northwest. Skill in walking with the feet wide apart and with the body cautiously balanced is essential to the art. But on journeys which the missionary has to undertake, and which often stretch over days and over miles, even skill does not prevent the feet from becoming blistered and jellied. When "*le mal de raquettes*" sets in there is real torture.

Thirst on the trail is another almost intolerable suffering experienced by missionaries. It comes to the traveler in northern fields of ice and snow as well as to the traveler in the desert, but to the former it brings as well the fatal craving for cooling snow. Tantalus was condemned to pass eternity immersed in water up to the chin without being able to moisten his lips. But here, with snow all around, it would be so easy to stoop for a handful and get untold relief. Oh, no—beware! A mouthful, even, holds danger of death. Even when thirsty voyageurs stop long enough to melt the snow into water, "to drink it makes one feel as if an ice-ball were taking the place of the brain," they say.

Thirst, no doubt, stands for the crucial experience of those



who go forth to preach Jesus Crucified, to preach Him Who so thirsted for the salvation of souls.

Change of season means change of suffering for the Apostle of the far North and Alaska. Where the long winter loses itself in a sudden leap over spring to a short summer, everything promises well. The short season of almost continual sunshine seems to compensate completely for its brevity by a brisk revival of nature. Everything in the animal and vegetable kingdom teems with life; the fawns of moose and caribou gambol about; bear cubs play their games; parent birds teach their fledglings. The people, too, are all activity, for, like bees, they have to lay by for the winter's needs. And then, of a sudden, all the joy of zestful living is lost in strife with legions of bloodthirsty mosquitoes and of fiery stinging gnats. These winged marauders defy every device invented for their destruction; they penetrate everywhere by billions, inside one's clothing, under one's coverlets, and through the finest wire screens. Smoke and nets offer some protection from mosquitoes but gnats seem to laugh at all attempts to quell them. The uninitiated missionary suffers most.

Every phase of the far North hardships in climate, in travel, in isolation, in abject living and in intercourse with Indians, became with the extension of the Fur Trade to the great Northwest and to the Pacific, a familiar topic for evening conversation in the households of Eastern Canada. The discussion aroused a variety of feelings in the hearts of those who listened. The good habitant thanked God for the comfort of his raftered home, his corded wood, his full barns and the promise of his goodly acres. The thrifty housewife considered the quantity of stored homespun and woolen garments, her well-supplied larder. The daughter dreamed of the future and worked intently on her bridal trousseau. But the boys! Oh, let us not disturb the peaceful family fireside by revealing the thoughts of many of these youths as they survey their rural patrimony and turn from it to follow the lure of adventure—the call of the Upper Country. The call struck two notes. One found response in the youth who ambitioned worldly exploits. The

other in the Levite who aspired to the conquest of souls. The response to either call will deeply affect the domestic circle. Let God's light of guidance dawn gently upon each of its members.

THE AUTHOR.

---

## CONTENTS

---

FOREWORD . . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	ix
CHAPTER	
I. A SOUND FROM HEAVEN . . . . .	3
II. THE UTMOST FOR THE HIGHEST . . . . .	12
III. LACHINE TO THE UP COUNTRY . . . . .	21
IV. THROUGH ALIEN CHANNELS . . . . .	34
V. THE WESTERN BEACON . . . . .	47
VI. WESTWARD EVER WESTWARD . . . . .	55
VII. THE FIELDS ARE WHITE . . . . .	69
VIII. CROSS ISLAND . . . . .	80
IX. IROQUOIS HARBINGERS OF MISSIONARIES . . . . .	90
X. CHIEFS WELCOME CATHOLICISM . . . . .	102
XI. WITH THE STUART LAKE BRIGADE . . . . .	111
XII. FROM GLORY TO CALVARY . . . . .	124
XIII. ARCHBISHOP F. N. BLANCHET . . . . .	139
XIV. EPISCOPAL BURDEN—INTERLUDE . . . . .	151
XV. ADRIFT FROM HEART MOORINGS . . . . .	161
XVI. THE SYMBOL . . . . .	173
XVII. CHRISTIAN PROGRESS . . . . .	191
XVIII. THE INVITATION HEEDED . . . . .	203
XIX. MARTYR BISHOPS OF VICTORIA DIOCESE . . . . .	215
XX. HONOR MISSIONARY ROLL (THE "60's") . . . . .	228
XXI. HONOR MISSIONARY ROLL (THE "70's") . . . . .	239
XXII. AUXILIARIES . . . . .	253
XXIII. CHRIST'S HERALD ENDS HIS COURSE . . . . .	261
SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS . . . . .	270
INDEX . . . . .	271
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE . . . . .	274



---

## POEMS

---

THE SPIRIT SANCTIFIER—"MIRIAM," S.S.A. . . . .	vi
TO FIELDS AFAR—SISTER MARY STELLA, S.S.A. . . . .	33
THE MARTYR APOSTLE OF ALASKA—"MIRIAM," S.S.A. . . .	222
THE TORCH—SISTER MARY MILDRED, S.S.A. . . . .	252
FOUNDATION STONES—"MIRIAM," S.S.A. . . . .	269

---

## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

PIUS XI, THE POPE OF THE MISSIONS . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CHRIST THE KING . . . . .	12
PARTING OF THE BRIGADES . . . . .	52
BOAT ENCAMPMENT . . . . .	62
WITH THE STUART LAKE BRIGADE . . . . .	112
FORT VICTORIA . . . . .	132
MOST REVEREND FRANCIS NORBERT BLANCHET . . . . .	140
MOST REVEREND MODESTE DEMERS . . . . .	152
THE ARRIVAL OF THE YUGLETAS AT NANAIMO . . . . .	190
CHAPEL OF ST. ANN'S ACADEMY . . . . .	204
MOST REVEREND CHARLES JOHN SEGHERS . . . . .	216
MOST REVEREND JOHN NICHOLAS LEMMENS . . . . .	222
ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL . . . . .	226
MOST REVEREND LOUIS J. D'HERBONEZ . . . . .	230
MEMORIAL CRYPT . . . . .	269





## PART ONE



---

## CHAPTER I

---

### A SOUND FROM HEAVEN

**H**ISTORY attests that at certain epochs a Pentecostal wind stirs the world, and, reviving the apostolic impulse, renews the face of the earth.

A transformation of this kind took place in England in the sixth century when Saint Augustine and forty monks, all duly accredited by Pope Saint Gregory I, went forth from Italy to christianize the heathen people of Britain.

One hundred seventy years before, Ireland had received the same blessing of conversion through the teaching and example of Saint Patrick and his zealous Gallic co-laborers, who, by the papal authority of His Holiness Pope Saint Celestine I, had been commissioned to go forth to teach and to baptize.

Strongest of the Pentecostal waves was that which enrolled all European Christendom in the Crusades,—the mightiest missionary movement ever known.

The next in importance carried the standard-bearers of Christ the King across the seas to America in the vanguard of eager explorers. Here in the New World were opportunities for the bravest of the brave among those who formed the ranks of the one true Church; here were difficulties which the past had never known.

The new apostolate had for setting a continent of virgin forests—harborage of wild beasts and of fierce humans; for highway travel, lordly rivers whose breadth and length were a succession of dangers. But, what the discoverer, the explorer could venture for fame and gain, the Heralds of Christ the King could endure for souls.

France, who had lost no time in distinguishing herself in the New World by her discovery of Canada, had her vanguard of missionaries wherever she penetrated. Father le Carou, a

Recollet, accompanied Samuel de Champlain when in 1615 he set out on the voyages in which he discovered Lake Nipissing, Lake Huron and Lakes Simcoe and Ontario. Father Antoine Silvy, a Jesuit, was in the far North as far back as 1684. De la Verendrye in his explorations to the northwest as far as the Rocky Mountains, and then southward to Missouri, had with him three Jesuits—Fathers Messaiger, Coquart and Auneau. The last named was massacred by the Sioux on an island in Lake Lacroix in 1786.

Especially worthy of her long established title of “eldest daughter of the Church” did France prove herself by the heroic labors of her consecrated sons, eight of whom were martyred by the ferocious Iroquois between 1642 and 1649. The glory of their canonization in June 1930, is shared equally by the country that gave them birth and by that in which they shed their blood. The pride of Canada dominates, however, in that the specific registration in the calendar of saints designates them as “The Canadian Martyrs.”

But the fear of martyrdom, far from stemming the tide of missionary spirit, rather increased it. From the sons of France it passed to the sons of the Canadian sod. In 1663, only fifty-five years after the foundation of Quebec, the first city of New France, Bishop Laval founded a seminary for the youth of the new land.

In the archives of the Seminary, under date of July 5, 1708, is inscribed a name which was to become a benediction to the Northwest Pacific Coast. It is the name of the Demers family in Canada. John Demers, born in Dieppe, France, in 1632, married Jeanne Redie in Montreal in 1654. These are the ancestors of the great missionary and apostle of British Columbia,—Bishop Modeste Demers.<sup>1</sup>

In the above-named register it is noted that “the seminary had a Requiem service sung for John Demers” which implies

<sup>1</sup> For details concerning the vocation and missionary life of Bishop Demers the writer is indebted to *Fragments de l'histoire de St. Nicholas* by E. T. Paquet, 1894. Parts of the work are direct translations from the original French.



that the deceased had favored the institution in some practical way and his name was held in grateful memory.

If the Demers family received distinction from its connection with the Seminary, this distinction was reciprocated by the renown which came to the institution through its alumni, Jerome and Modeste Demers. The greatness of the former, who was attached to the Seminary as professor and superior for more than fifty years, may be judged by these descriptive words of an old pupil: "A high brow crowned a head particularly fashioned to contain the vast science, the upright solid judgment, the genius, we may say, of this truly distinguished man, in whom everything was noble and imposing—an erudite humble priest who twice refused the mitre."

Much that is contained in a character estimate of the Reverend Jerome Demers, and more, applies to his cousin Modeste. But while the one gave the plenitude of his gifts to Canada's highest seat of learning, the other spent his in the wigwams of Indians trying to open their dense minds to the light of faith.

The Demers name merits honorable mention, also, in the Recollet order. Alexis was one of the teaching Brothers of the Order in Quebec, and Father Louis one of its superiors in Montreal. Did fidelity of kith and kin to their religious vocation merit the call of the apostolic ministry for Bishop Demers—a call that brought him to the Northwest lands bordering on the Pacific Ocean?

Public sentiment bestows a cult on the birthplace of persons who, by some accomplishment, have distinguished themselves to a supereminent degree. A like homage is surely due to the locality which has given Christlike heroes to the quest of the uncivilized heathen to redeem them and to elevate them to citizenship in the state, and to membership in the Church.

Such a place is the Canadian parish of St. Nicholas, Quebec, founded in 1694. The little village of St. Nicholas is situated near Levis on the Chaudière River. Here on October 11, 1809, was born a child destined to sow the good seed of the Gospel from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This was Modeste Demers,

one of the greatest missionaries of North America. The Demers ancestral home was in the French regime stone style so common in the province of Quebec. It was a house of the middle class which shone with the luster of the pearl of great price.

Modeste was so weak and frail in infancy that his parents, Michael Demers and Rosalie Foucher, feared he would not live to childhood. In their anxiety and affliction, but with Christian resignation, they offered the sacrifice of the dear little one's life to the Maker who had lent it to them.

The child was spared. God had a great work laid out for him. He grew up like the children of his class and times; he did farm chores and learned the elements of reading from one of his sisters. He was bright, and at the age of seven he knew his morning and evening prayers. And not only did he know them, but he said them with devotion. Moreover, he often retired to a little room where he repeated them with a fervor surprising in one of his age. His pious mother often discovered him thus engaged, and the sight filled her with glad hope and holy fear. She augured with the instinct of a Catholic mother that such exceptional piety might be the sign of a call to the priesthood.

A thought so sweetly consoling was not, however, without its perplexity. One day, wishing to learn more surely the secret of this pure, candid little soul confided to her keeping, she questioned him.

"Modeste, what intention do you have in your prayers?"

"Mama," he answered, as if the grace of a sacerdotal vocation already dwelt in his young heart, "you have often told me that when I was so frail in my babyhood you thought I might die, and that you made the offering of me to God. Now that I have the prospect of a prolonged life, I pray that your sacrifice may be fulfilled in my becoming a priest."

This hoped-for revelation from her privileged child filled the mother with holy joy. So mature an answer from one so young made her think it had a glimmer of divine revelation. But if so, if Modeste was really called to Holy Orders, how

could the family in its straightened circumstances meet the expense of the many years of preparatory study?

Preoccupied with this difficulty, she went to speak about it to the venerable parish priest. He listened to the good mother attentively, then, with the supernatural light of his office, he gave her this comforting answer, "My good woman, have confidence, you are a blest mother for you have there an angelic child. God will give him the means to attain his aims."

And thou, child  
shall go before the face of the Lord  
to prepare his ways;  
to give knowledge of salvation  
to His people;  
To enlighten them that sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death.

Monsieur le Curé was the central figure of every French Canadian parish—the standby, the adviser of his flock in all matters pertaining to their welfare. He encouraged early marriages and advocated large families, for such is truly God's plan. And the divine plan when followed righteously, enthrones joy of heart—cheeriness. Among the Canadians of Lower Canada, for instance, the attitude towards children was, "The more, the better." Even the advent of a twentieth or twenty-first child was merrily announced in the formula, "We have been enriched with a fine boy—or a lovely girl."

Meanwhile little Modeste Demers prepared for his first Holy Communion with extraordinary dispositions. So sure was the pastor of the boy's piety, intelligence and exemplary behavior, that he often had the lad question the catechism class. Children are keen observers. At once, without any preconceived understanding, they fall in or out of line, become attentive or troublesome. Modeste held the class in his hands. This was the first intimation of his being a person of "peaceful power." His comrades fittingly surnamed him the "little priest." On the day of his First Communion, the congregation, im-

pressed by his recollection and piety, changed the title to "the little saint."

So far his education had proceeded no farther than learning how to read, and acquiring the rudiments of grammar from one of the itinerant teachers. This dearth of knowledge in a boy of eleven need not astonish those who look back some hundred and twenty-five years in Canadian history to the time when there were few schools, and none at all in village after village.

But the law of compensation exists everywhere. The home had its system of education; it afforded little book learning, but it had a code for character building. It produced moral power that has borne prosperous results coming down to these our days, for the Province of Quebec has become the subject of social study for a neighboring nation.

The ideal of the family was the Home of Nazareth. So faithfully, within human limitations, did the French Canadians try to reproduce this model in their lives that they have been called the "pioneers of devotion to the Holy Family." The lines on which this home education was built were simple enough; but without the example and good will of the parents, they would have been useless.

Bishop Laval, in a pastoral letter issued in 1665, laid down rules for the guidance of parents: "Parents are to take great care in bringing up their children in the fear of God; teach them their prayers, and see that they say them morning and night; inspire them with horror for sin, and suffer nothing in them that might offend God." To the parents themselves he says, "Correct children with gentleness; bear their shortcomings patiently; look after their cleanliness." And next, the saintly bishop gives the supernatural motive, "Parents are to see in their offspring the Child Jesus of Whom they are the living image."

Within her simple home the mother exercised the divine right of her office in giving the first language lesson to her little ones. The first step was to teach them to pronounce the holy name of Jesus, and to make the offering, "My God, I



give thee my heart and soul. Please accept them." This word "please" is a note of charming politeness towards the infinite God.

The first picture-study was directed to the Crucifix that, with pious pictures, hung on the wall. The cradle was rocked to the rhythm of hymns, songs and ballads which converged on uplifting impressions. The father, as head of the family, exercised his authority with justice and dignity; the children obeyed the Fourth Commandment of God.

Such fundamental lessons based on sacred principles are the essentials in all true education. In the designs of Providence they are to work hand in hand with secular science, and lead all to their true end—the education of an heir to God's kingdom.

Happy in the possession of such noble home education, Modeste Demers thirsted for the knowledge that would fit him for the priesthood, yet he was getting on in his 'teens without seeing any prospect of going to college. Besides considering the limited means of his family, the father, Mr. Demers, shared the prejudice against education that prevailed among the agricultural class of those times. They were prosperous enough—they were contented—what more could the rising generation wish for?

Heaven, all the while, was looking down kindly on the poor lad whose one longing was to enlist in the service of its Supreme King. The time for the realization of his desire was drawing near. The gate was opened by angels unawares.

In the summer holidays of 1823, Reverend B. Desrochers, then a student in rhetoric at the Seminary, came to St. Nicholas with a classmate to visit relatives among whom were the Demers. One day he asked for the use of a carriage. In the absence of Mr. Demers, Modeste went as driver. For him to be with college students was bliss. He was too happy and too shy to say a word. The other youths, noting the intelligent look of the boy, asked him the question which is always uppermost in the minds of those at the crossing of the roads, "What do you intend to be?"

"I want to be a priest."

"Good! Come to college with us."

"There is nothing I would like better; but father is not well enough off to stand the expense."

"Your father is as well off as mine who is educating my brother and myself. Tell him that, and say, too, that the cost is not as great as he thinks. Insist very much and pray a great deal. On our part we will pray for you. Be of good heart; all will succeed."

A faithful friend is  
the medicine of life and immortality.

Modeste found this so, and encouraged by the hearty advice of the seminary students, he resumed his representations with his father. At first there were no immediate results. It is God's way to try the constancy of His genuine servants. The greater the mission He holds in waiting for them, the greater the test of perseverance.

Modeste redoubled his prayers and renewed his trust in God's Providence and resignation to His Divine Will. These two virtues penetrated the very marrow of his bones. They became the staff upon which he leaned in the extraordinary emergencies of his later service in the Church. They were to be crowned with admirable results.

One day during the trial of waiting, Modeste was praying with intense fervor when, in the interior of this soul, he seemed to hear a voice that said, "Win over your mother, brothers and sisters. God will do the rest." An occasion soon presented itself. As the boy went about preoccupied with his aspirations and unusually sad, his mother asked what ailed him.

"I grieve," he explained, "because you refuse to ratify the sacrifice you made of my life to God when you thought I would die an early death. How can the family be blessed so long as it refuses to let me be a priest?"

The inspired rebuke hastened the final decision. When Mr. Demers came in, his wife, his sons, his daughters, all joined in pleading the cause of their brother. After listening

to their arguments, Mr. Demers consented to let Modeste follow whither his heart led.

"Since it seems to be the will of God," he said, "that our boy should be a priest, He will help us to meet the requirements."

The following spring, 1825, Mr. Demers took his son Modeste to Quebec, and confided him to the care of Mr. J. Bezeau, a benefactor of youth. The generous gentleman received Modeste with kindness and arranged for his attendance at classes, in company with C. Desrochers, brother of Reverend B. Desrochers, in the preparatory college recently opened by Bishop Plessis for aspirants to the priesthood.

Modeste was now sixteen.

Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light.

---

## CHAPTER II

---

### THE UTMOST FOR THE HIGHEST

AFTER the death of Bishop Plessis, Modeste entered the "Petit Seminaire" at Quebec. As was to be expected of one so eager to learn and so absorbed in the thought of being a priest, the young Demers was a most satisfactory student. That which above all else distinguished him during his years of study was his piety, his deep-rooted virtue and his great love of God. Even during his vacations he annually made a few days' retreat. To this retreat he invited kindred souls over whom he kept a strict but gentle supervision.

He was an earnest though not a brilliant pupil; but if he did not stand first in his classes, the rare solidarity of his judgment gave his professors reason to foretell great things for him.

An extremely tender chord ran through his whole life; there are many evidences of it along his ministry. He shed tears when he bade farewell to the enlightened staff of the "Little Seminary" who had directed him through his seven years' course.

His last vacation, just before entering the "Grand Seminary," was a source of edification to those who saw him. Though the parish church was far from his home, he walked there every day to hear Holy Mass and to make his meditation. Every Saturday he received Holy Communion in honor of Our Blessed Lady for whom he always had the greatest devotion. In fact, along his missionary pathway westward there are memory shrines marking the spots where he offered special homage to Mary Immaculate.

Embracing the sacerdotal state for time and for eternity (since, like Baptism, it leaves an indelible mark), is fraught with such tremendous responsibilities that too much reflection cannot be given to it even by those who have felt drawn to it





CHRISTUS REGNAT / CHRISTUS VINCIT  
CHRISTUS IMPERAT



from early youth. Hence, for greater assurance that God wanted him in this sublime career, Modeste spent one of the last days of this decisive vacation in prayer and consultation with his pastor. Towards evening of that momentous August day, he went homeward with the certainty that God did want him for the service of the altar.

The family had to be told of his positive decision. They might have surmised it, as the onlookers expected it, but they understood too that the step is so full of import that a prospective seminarian is sometimes too overwhelmed by the realization of the obligations of his calling to assume them.

Then also there is the allurements of the golden opportunities open to one who stands on the threshold of special activity, equipped with the vigor of manhood. Too often, perhaps, the angels of the sanctuary sadly fold their wings at the sight of a receding candidate. If the vocation be genuine, the defection may bring terrible consequences, the least being utter failure in life.

There stands before us a lamentable example of this kind. In one of our western states, the sisters who go on a weekly errand of mercy to the state prison were deeply touched by the sight of a man of seventy who occupied the solitary cell, awaiting the death penalty for murder. The poor man passed the greater part of the day sitting at his table with a crucifix before him. Resignation and contrition were stamped upon his features.

"I have been condemned on circumstantial evidence," he told the sisters. "A woman was murdered in a house where I had been doing some plumbing. I was the last person seen there so the accusation of guilt fell on me. I deserve the penalty that has come to me, and much more. Though I am innocent of this crime the punishment I endure can never undo the evil committed for which I am accountable, and the good which has not been done through my fault. I deliberately went against my call to the priesthood."

With Modeste Demers, however, neither the onerous priestly office nor the seductions of the world could change his

resolve to labor in Christ's vineyard. Had not the words of his pastor endorsed his predilection for that holy oblation!

The family was gathered together in the restfulness of the autumn evening when he announced his determination. As a prelude, Modeste went over, one by one, the sacrifices made for him by his parents and by the individual members of the household. He thanked them each and all for every separate act that had led him to the threshold of his dearest desires. Then he added, "I cannot tell you in loftier words than those used today by our Pastor what I intend doing with all that you have done for me. These are his words: 'When God surrounds a young man with a special protection, and gives his parents strength to bear privations to provide for their son a superior education, do not doubt that He wants that young man near His Heart, and destines him for His divine service.' These words, dear ones, apply to me. They set the seal on my firm decision to do all in my power to become a priest."

Great was the emotion of the speaker, and great too was that of his hearers. All wept. It was a blending of the human and the divine. It was a Catholic climax in a really Christian home. Mr. Demers had hesitated at first in giving his consent, but his hesitation was not from want of faith; it was truly by the permission of God. Now that he saw his son prepared for the great sacrifice he gave his permission with paternal tenderness. He also began to provide the outfit and incidentals which his son would need for his new life in the Grand Seminary.

Modeste Demers was vested in ecclesiastic garb that same fall, 1832. During the four years of his theological studies, the young levite gave proof that he had the fundamentals of the Catholic priesthood—piety and respect for authority. With these as foundation he could build securely. He spent his vacations with Father Desrochers, parish priest at St. Urban, who, we will remember, was the seminarian that, during a drive with the lad Modeste, had given him pointers as to how he might reach his present goal.

Acting on the theory that a change is as good as a rest, Modeste Demers filled his vacations with a sort of apprentice-



ship in the program that he afterwards adopted in evangelizing the Indians. He taught catechism, instructed children for their first Holy Communion and even preached their preparatory retreat. Moreover, he taught singing and the ceremonies of the Church, and cultivated a taste for altar decorations in the young people of the parish.

United as were the pastor and the seminarian by the ties of blood and of clerical vocation, they were congenial companions. As from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, the younger often gave his hearer an insight into his attraction for mission work among the Indians. It was the germ of a "vocation within a vocation." Neither of them had any idea how very soon it was to bud forth.

At the termination of his studies, there was no hesitation in admitting to Holy Ordination one of such excellent character, sincere piety and sound learning. The sacred announcement was made to him on January 31, 1836, by the Reverend Jerome Demers, a distant relative who was then superior of the Seminary.

There is a fascination in this picture of those two men—each the glory of his country, one in his prime, a patriot-priest, standing to bless the other, a priest elect, the future apostle of the uttermost limit of his native land, fair Canada.

On Friday the 7th of February, 1836, Modeste Demers was ordained by Bishop Signay in the cathedral of Quebec. After the ceremony, accompanied by his parents and other members of the family, he left for St. Nicholas where he was to offer his first Holy Mass in his own parish church. According to the custom of the times, the first Mass of a newly ordained priest was one of thanksgiving, and the day was spent by the parishioners in pious festivity.

At the dinner served in the parental home following the Mass, there was a touching scene which deeply impressed the guests. The host, Mr. Demers, stood, and, in a voice full of emotion said, "Reverend Pastor, and you, my friends, I wish to tell you a secret which makes me very happy at this moment. Every day since my son entered the Seminary, I have said five

Paters and Aves for his intentions. I shall now continue to offer them in thanksgiving to God for the great favor conferred on us by his elevation to the priesthood."

He was unable to say more, but his wife, his sons and daughters quickly added, "We, too, have said them, and, following your example, we shall continue to do so for the remainder of our lives."

When our loving Redeemer said, "My delights are to be with the children of men," He may have been visualizing this home on the banks of the Chaudière River.

The newly ordained priest was appointed assistant to the pastor of Trois Pistoles.<sup>1</sup> There, the relations between pastor and curate were those of spiritual father and son—of cordial co-operation and of identity of views. This happy sympathetic partnership lasted only fourteen months. Then came the hour for the special mission of Father Demers in the Catholic Church—the hour when the missionary zeal that all along had been inflaming the recesses of his heart would find an outlet.

The missionary field open to the Canadian clergy had been within the confines of its own extensive territory for nearly two centuries and a half. In 1838 it covered a region nearly the size of Europe. It extended from the Great Lakes and the United States on the south to the Athabasca-McKenzie on the farthest north; and from the Hudson Bay on the east, westward to the Rocky Mountains, and over their summits to the Pacific Coast.

Westward from the settlements of Quebec and Ontario everything was reminiscent of pristine creation—tangled plains, impenetrable forests, rivers—miles of them dashing over one rapid after another, and lofty mountains bounding the western sea. No dream-city marred the vision, only fur-trading posts dotted the country at distances of hundreds of miles. Distance had no meaning there. During the long winter months the lone trader, the trapper, the missionary went about from post to

<sup>1</sup> A town between Saguenay and Rimouski, so named from the price asked by a fisherman to take a hunter across the river. The Canadian "pistolet," equal to ten francs, must not be confounded with the Spanish one worth three dollars.

post over snow and ice fields, in dog sleds or on snowshoes. In the summer they traveled on horseback, on foot or by canoe.

This boundless land was the rightful and hereditary domain of Indian tribes—the Sioux, the Crees, the Blackfeet and their various branches. These shared the land with rich, fur-bearing animals which, in their lordly way, had roamed over it ever since God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind."

Nothing is lost in creation. Irrational animals, the buffalo, the moose, the caribou, and even the smaller animals, birds and fish, provided food and raiment for rational beings. And yet these rational beings, the heathen natives of the land, while enjoying the benefits of a bountiful creation, knew nothing of God the Creator.

The whole field of wilderness, of mountain and of plain was familiar to Father Demers. Often had he gazed upon it in his meditations. Always had it attracted him, impelled him to search its mysteries, to endure its hardships in the endeavor to spread the knowledge of God, the Creator, to be a herald of Christ the King.

The desire may have been more or less latent in the soul of the young priest with little hope of its ever materializing. Enough of it must have escaped him, however, to have reached Reverend Father Gingras, who was connected with the Quebec Seminary. Consequently, when Bishop Provencher of the Red River Settlement was on a tour of Eastern Canada to recruit priests for his diocese in 1837, and had met with disappointment everywhere, Father Gingras suddenly remembered Father Demers.

"I have the right man for you," he exclaimed, "I know him well. He was ordained a little more than a year ago. A model seminarian, humble, zealous, courageous—the right stuff for a missionary. I am sure he will accept; but first we must submit the matter to the Bishop."

Good Bishop Signay was in sore need of priests himself but the Red River Settlement was under his jurisdiction. He was

willing to sacrifice the promising services of the curate for the greater cause. He wrote to Father Demers giving him permission to follow the bent of his zeal.

The Reverend Father was overjoyed on receiving this letter. It was the crown to his priesthood. But the pastor and the people of Trois Pistoles, where he was so beloved, took matters differently. How they did plead to have him stay with them; but the long wished-for opportunity to be a missionary was not so easily set aside.

He started at once. There was no time to lose if he would be on time to travel with the Hudson's Bay Brigade which left every spring for the Upper Country. An early thaw had made the roads from Trois Pistoles to Quebec impassable for either cart or sleigh. It took Father Demers five days to make the nine-mile journey. It was no mere plodding through slush; the snow banks had become impetuous streams or blocked the way with icy floods. Harassing as was this first stage of the missionary trek, it was only practice for the following thirty-four years of journeyings through a demi-continent that, until recently, had been the undisturbed empire of imperial waters, of thick woods and of sky-scaling mountains.

On his way from Trois Pistoles to Quebec, Father Demers stopped to say Mass at St. Ann's College. The professors and students of this pious institution felt honored for they could appreciate the heroism of one volunteering for the most difficult ministry of the period. Moreover, he was setting out alone. The time was nearly one hundred years off when missionary bands of priests and religious would embark by the score, on steamships bound for African or Oriental fields afar. (As, for instance, from one community—the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Immaculate—fifty-four sisters left in one year for the foreign missions.)

Little wonder, then, that the college personnel gazed on the solitary missionary with veneration. On such an occasion the truth sinks deeply into the souls of the religious-minded that

Many are called  
but few are chosen.



Meanwhile, Father Demers was reaching the most painful moment of his life—the hour of farewell to his home in St. Nicholas. From Quebec he crossed on foot to Levis on the three-mile bridge of ice that blocked the St. Lawrence River.

Sad, sublime, heroic is the missionary's leave-taking of all that is most dear and sacred to the human heart. Whether the parting is from the most Christian, or from the least Christian family, it is equally heart-rending. A veteran missionary wrote fifty years after his first departure from home: "I have had a varied and hard life; but I can truly say that of all my trials and sufferings, none of them, according to me, compare with that of departure and separation. One never becomes accustomed to those things. The first time I left home, I was sure I would never meet my own except in heaven. Divine Providence has decreed it otherwise. I have seen my aged father three times; my brothers and sisters five times. But each time I had to run away to escape farewells."

Oh, the pathos of this revelation!

An eyewitness to the farewell that took place in the Demers family has described it: "I still see that venerable old man in the arms of his son in a mutual embrace, begging him to have pity on the gray hairs of his parents, and to remember the sacrifices they had made for him, and not to shorten their days on earth by a separation beyond their strength. His mother sobbed her appeal clinging to him with the passion of maternal love; holding him as if she would never let him go.

"Father Demers did not falter. 'Do not put obstacles to the holy will of God,' he said. 'It is for your eternal salvation and mine that I impose this separation on myself. Believe me, it is as hard for me as it is for you; but it is our necessary contribution to the salvation of souls made in the image of Christ and redeemed by His precious Blood.'

"Kneeling down before his venerable father, as he had done every New Year's morning from the time he could speak, and on the occasion of the chief events of his life, he said, 'Father, bless me, please.'

"Standing in the dignity of his fatherhood, this Canadian

farmer, whose manner and appearance was that of a patriarch, spread both his hands over the priestly head, and repeated the formula familiar in every household of the time: 'May God bless you, my son, as I do. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'

"Then he took his wife's hand, and kneeling by her side, he said, 'My son, give the blessing of your anointed hands to the authors of your life.'

"All present knelt. Silently, then, Father Demers was helped into his big coat, his 'ceinture flechée' was tied about his waist, his earlet fur cap was fastened on. He raised his hand in a parting blessing and passed from his home. His two brothers accompanied him. Never again in this valley of tears did he meet his father and mother, for within a brief time, and at a short interval from each other, husband and wife were laid in their last resting place, to await there the day of eternal reunion."

He that loveth father or mother  
more than Me  
is not worthy of Me  
And he that taketh not up his cross  
and followeth Me  
is not worthy of Me.

---

## CHAPTER III

---

### LACHINE TO THE UP COUNTRY

FROM his home at St. Nicholas, Father Demers proceeded to Lachine, covering the distance of one hundred and eighty-five miles over the difficult spring roads by cart, by sleigh, on foot and in rowboat. The Grand Trunk Railway connecting Quebec and Montreal was built only seventeen years later.

Lachine, on the upper part of the Island of Montreal, was for more than two hundred years the point of departure for the brigades of fur-traders northwest bound. The site is mentioned in colonial history as being the property of Chevalier de la Salle. The young French owner had intended to clear the land for cultivation, but he inhaled too deeply of America's ozone to settle down to farming. The thrill of adventure was in his blood.

Like many another, he was ambitious to find a way to China. When he returned in 1670 from the disappointing attempt that brought him to the Mississippi instead of to the western ocean, the people nicknamed his seigneurie "La Chine"—French for China. Too courageous to be perturbed by banter, de la Salle pursued his hobby for discovery. Meantime a settlement was formed on his Lachine grant. The settlement prospered for a time, but its innocent and peaceful inhabitants had later to suffer in retribution for a mistake made by Champlain some eighty years before.

In the summer of 1609, Champlain, heedless of consequences, had promised help to the Algonquins and Hurons against their Iroquois foes. It would have been a more Christian policy and a wiser one to have remained on friendly terms with all the tribes. Instead of this, he cast such terror among the Iroquois with the deadly use of firearms that they fled in

terror. Because of the death of three of their chiefs, and of the many wounded in the unequal fight, the bitterness of revenge burned in their hearts and was handed down to their posterity, who finally wreaked vengeance on the French in the Massacre of Lachine.

The following is a graphic account of the execution of their dreadful plan: "The night of August 4th, 1689, was dark and stormy with rain and hail. Just such a night as might cover the approach of a stealthy foe. Fourteen hundred vengeful and relentless Iroquois had descended the St. Lawrence and stationed themselves on the south side of Lake St. Louis opposite Lachine.

"About midnight, amid the darkness and noise of the elements, they crossed the lake, and landing, posted themselves in small bands close to the dwellings of the slumbering inhabitants. An hour or so before daybreak, the war-whoop signal was sounded. A thousand throats gave forth the savage yell, and then began the slaughter that made the Massacre of Lachine a word of terror for generations."

Enough of this harrowing episode.

Opposite to Lachine are the Lachine Rapids nine miles up the St. Lawrence from Montreal. In order to avoid the risk of losing fur cargoes brought from the distant Up-Country while descending these dangerous rapids, Lachine was selected for the fur-trade depot. This move was the result of long experience and many a disaster, for, dating from Champlain's time, 1611, Montreal had been the headquarters of the peltry trade. Among the disasters, there was on record the account of canoes being capsized with a total loss of the furs. Such misfortune meant that a ton of furs was engulfed in the flowing river, for every canoe contained forty packs of fifty pounds each.

In 1670, therefore, Lachine became the fur trade center, and the place from which the flotillas or brigades set out on expeditions to the fur lands. These expeditions were no insignificant enterprises. In the heyday of their prosperity, they reached from the St. Lawrence over a distance of five thousand three hundred and twenty-five miles—to Oregon and British



Columbia, as the early missionaries testify. The journey, including detentions, then occupied six months.

Without doubt, the fur trade was a prime factor in the making of Canada. From its earliest days in New France it was the paramount business concern of the country and a source of untold wealth alike to individuals and to the firms who engaged in the traffic. As time went on, fur-trading companies were formed. Eventually, three of these merged into the Great Northwest Company. For fifty-seven years this company was the formidable rival of the Hudson's Bay Company, formed in England with a charter which dates back to 1670.

As the mad strife for supremacy in the trade was ruinous to both companies, and their reckless killing was leading to the utter destruction of the fur-bearing animals, the two companies amalgamated rather peacefully in 1821. The older name—Hudson's Bay Company—was agreed upon. As such it is known to this day through a chain of stores extending from one end of the Dominion to the other; but in it there is now little trace of the magnificent fur trade from which it evolved.

Previous to the union of the companies, the trade of the Hudson's Bay Company had been carried on with European markets from the Company's headquarters at York Factory on the southwest point of Hudson's Bay; but with the union the long-established route to Lachine and Montreal was adopted.

Though this overland journey was longer than that through the Bay, it had many advantages, not the least of which was the longer season it afforded. The route had been traced by the French explorer de la Verendrye. Leaving Lachine, the voyageurs went up the Ottawa River as far as the Mattawa; then through Lake Nipissing into Lake Huron; from there to the mouth of Lake Michigan, along Lake Superior to Grand Portage, where the first part of the journey ended.

The brigades going northward after overcoming the obstacle of Grand Portage, poled up the Kaministiquia River to the height of land. Then as far as Cross Lake, there was a succession of unconnected sheets of water that necessitated long portages. After this, progress was easier downstream to

Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods to the mouth of the Winnipeg River. In Hudson Bay some thirty miles of canoeing skirting the shores of the bay brought them to the mouth of the Red River. This the travelers ascended to the point of destination.

Such had been the route followed by Reverend Fathers Joseph Norbert Provencher and Severe Nicholas Dumoulin, with their assistant, William Stephen Edge, when in 1818 they left Montreal as duly appointed and permanent priests in charge of the Red River Settlement. This same way went others to engage in the work of teaching the Indians to know, love and serve God.

Among these apostolic men was Father Demers. On April 27, 1837, he embarked at Lachine, under compliment of a free passage, in one of the big birch bark canoes of the Hudson's Bay Brigade. His present destination, which proved to be temporary pending his going to Oregon, was the diocese of St. Boniface, Red River Settlement, the territory now known as Manitoba.

It was to be a five weeks' journey over two thousand one hundred miles of difficult travel. Today, the luxury of the Pullman car is well known, and one has the choice of different trans-continental railway lines. The plane, even now in its still early stage of development offers astonishing comfort, for while speeding at the rate of two hundred sixty miles an hour, hostess service is provided, and an excellent cuisine is served in air-conditioned cabins. Again, if tourists prefer leisure sight-seeing, they may motor any distance at will over splendid roads.

All this variety of locomotion may be found in 1938; but in 1838 there was only one overland way; and, as the route followed the water course, the journey had to be made in canoes, shooting numberless rapids and making many portages. We know that the travelers did not sleep on beds of down, nor did they partake of epicurean repasts, nor was the weather always made to order.

At the time of Bishop Demers' departure, there were from

twenty-five to thirty canoes in the brigade. This number shows a great decrease in the fur trade. Charles Grant, writing in 1780, that is, fifty-seven years before, tells us that every spring from ninety to one hundred canoes left Lachine for the Up Country. This, too, was a greater decrease from the record year 1674, when eight hundred fur-laden canoes arrived in Montreal. The incoming boats had, of course, been the outgoing fleet in the spring.

The different canoes used in the fur trade were known as the *heavy*, or *freight*, the light or *lighter*, and the *express*, used by officials. *The York*, the climax in fur-trade boat models, was produced in 1826. It was built of choice spruce in two sizes—the smaller, twenty-eight feet long, the larger, forty feet by ten. The large canoes or boats were used for heavy transportation on inland rivers and for more difficult travel. In navigating these huge boats filled with their usual cargo of four and a half tons, the boatmen were required to haul heavy sweeps twenty feet long. With every pull of the oar, they rose to their feet and completed the stroke sitting down. Thrilled even at the account we may exclaim: “Those were the days!”

The greater number of canoes for the Canadian fur trade were made either of birch bark or of moose skin. For the latter, the hide of the moose was first dressed to parchment, the seams then sewn with sinews rubbed with tallow and adjusted to the strong spruce frame. On the Columbia the boats were called barges, or bateaux; from Lachine westward, canoes. No matter what name was given to them, they were all made on the principle of the canoe; and this name seems to have been applied more or less indifferently to all. The description of the various kinds of canoe used by the fur traders is invested with peculiar interest for us when we know how far, how often and how many missionaries traveled in them. Through the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company officials, the early missionaries were given free transportation in any boat in the service.

The brigades for the traffic from Lachine through the Great Lakes to Grand Portage were formed of the heavy canoes. They

were thirty-five feet by six, sharply pointed at the front and capable of carrying five tons. The frames were made of strong, light wood covered with sheets of birch bark, one-eighth of an inch thick and sewed with the fibers of roots. The joints were made watertight by gum which became perfectly hard. These canoes weighed little more than fifty pounds and were easily portaged. Each was manned by eight voyageurs.

The freight was done up in packs of ninety pounds each. For the up-country trip it consisted of the tents, personal baggage, cooking utensils, merchandise, mail, ammunition, rum, etc. A limited number of passengers found room wherever they could between the rowers and among the baggage. They had to put up with the inconveniences of the weather and of cramped positions in the boat. The quantity of food, too, was restricted—no flour, no sugar being allowed. The daily rations per man were two and a half pounds of pemmican, three pounds of dried buffalo meat and tea; very little flour, sugar, tea or pepper entered into the freight.

The oarsman crews, known as “voyageurs,” stand out in bold relief in the history of fur-trade navigation. They deserve honorable mention for their services to the missionaries. They were a race apart, consisting principally of French Canadians. They were hired in the hamlets of the lower St. Lawrence, under contract, and allowed certain privileges which ended on given dates and at given places. A necessary condition of their engagement was the ability to sing.

There were two classes, the “pork eaters” or “mangeurs de lard” whose work was rather easy since they had only to run the rapids between Montreal and Grand Portage in big four-ton boats in crews of ten men. The others were the real type—daring, hardy, strong—who took charge of the light canoes that carried only one and a half tons where the “pork eaters” left off, and met the dangers of the broken water route from the head of Lake Superior to the farthest north and west.

These voyageurs were a fine combination of courage and strength, and of the politeness of their Old France lineage. Their training at Nature’s school had given them a tall, well-



built frame, and an iron constitution, allied with the noble quality of the strong helping the weak.

The Scots, most of them from the Orkney and Lewis Islands, were a strong force also in the Hudson's Bay Service. Many of them entered the category of voyageurs.

Antiquity presents no heroes whose strength surpasses that of these voyageurs. A man of ordinary strength among them easily carried two packs each weighing ninety pounds. Those whose muscles had become more compact could carry more—even six, as a show-off. Strapping these packs on their heads so that they rested on the back, they carried them at a quick pace for several miles at a stretch.

Father Dugas, a Red River pioneer priest, has preserved the record of a feat of herculean strength. A certain José Paul, a Canadian voyageur from Sorel, Province of Quebec, was celebrated for exploits of great force. A Hudson's Bay clerk, wishing to put José's powers to the test, asked him, as if casually, to remove some sugar barrels from a corner on the counter. Shifting a hundred pound barrel was mere play to José. He had tossed a few in place when he took up one that made him see through the trick. Without letting on that this particular barrel was heavier than the others, he caught hold of it with taut muscles, and slung the weight on the counter. There was a crash. Counter and floor fell through and the barrel landed in the cellar. "There, little one," said José, addressing the dismayed proprietor, "go down and gather up your bullets." The trial barrel had been full of shot.

There were eight of these powerful men to a canoe; one a bowman, and another a steersman. Their work was to row and to carry the freight over the portages; they also put up the tents for the night when they came ashore.

Father Demers traveled, probably, as a guest passenger in the express canoe—a distinction usually given to missionaries. But, whether in the express or in the freight canoe, the voyageurs were quick to appreciate the privilege of being with him. He who had in a short time endeared himself to the parish in which he was only an assistant, and who was to con-

quer by peace the fierce tribes of the North, soon won a first place among these good-hearted, sagacious men. He was with them, of them.

Always bearing the mark of priestly dignity and what a certain writer describes as "the French nobleman living on in the courteous Canadian farmer," he made himself useful. He had what is called the knack of doing things. It is a very handy asset in missionaries but it is not born in all of them. It is developed in domestic surroundings but does not form part of college or seminary training. Father Demers also had a rich voice. This he lent to the choruses of the voyageurs.

The French are a gay race and great lovers of song. In the sometimes tedious expeditions of their chosen work the boatmen eased their exertions by singing national airs to the accompaniment of their oars. Accustomed as they were to life on the broad expanse of water, the drip, the splash and the swish-swish must have been impelling music to them. Essential then to the proper functioning of the brigades was the repertoire of folk songs. It is often alluded to in accounts of the journeys of that time.

Thomas Moore, who should certainly be a judge of melody, says in connection with his own Canadian Boat Song: "Our men had good voices and frequently sang perfectly in tune the air:

Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré  
Deux cavaliers très bien montés.

Refrain:

A l'ombre d'un bois, je m'en vais jouer,  
A l'ombre d'un bois, je m'en vais danser!"

Then the author of the undying "Irish Melodies" pays the French song this compliment: "I have heard this simple air with a pleasure which the finest compositions of the first masters have never given me."

George Bryce, biographer of Sir George Simpson, telling of the arrival of this great ruler of Hudson's Bay Company at Norway House, says, "As the canoes came near the shore,

the effect was heightened by the soft and lively notes of the French voyageurs. The song they sang in French was one that never becomes wearisome—that of ‘A la Claire Fontaine.’ The leader carolled the verses, then all joined in the chorus.”

Father Demers, with his warm Canadian blood, could not but join in the songs of the voyageurs, and, being the man of God that he was, he often intoned familiar hymns in which the crew could unite. His voice in community singing was not enough for the voyageurs. They often asked him to sing his own solo selections.

Besides the pleasure singing was to himself it was also, for him, a means to an end. Father Demers was no idle minister of the Church waiting for his journey’s end to begin his priestly mission. He filled it every day, even if only in the checking of profane language by his presence. But it was more than that. Souls who had become careless from want of Church opportunities rather than from wilfulness, attended Holy Mass whenever it could be offered along the way and received the Sacraments. At stopping places children were baptized.

The tactful missionary knew the temper of the men. He knew he could depend on them for May devotions when camp was made for the night. It was indeed beautiful to hear the shores echo:

“C’est le mois de Marie  
C’est le mois le plus beau,”

and their response to the Rosary.

But the course of life for God’s servants never runs smoothly. In one of the encampments Father Demers had the misfortune to scald his leg and foot so badly that it was impossible for him to walk. He was not disconcerted. “You must carry me on your shoulders over the portages,” he said.

But again what happened? The Indian who was carrying the Father stumbled and let his passenger drop into an icy pond. Such a plunge was of a nature to aggravate the inflamed condition of the injured foot, but it did not. With miraculous

rapidity the inflammation disappeared and perfect recovery followed.

Father Demers' arrival at St. Boniface brought a most welcome addition to Bishop Provencher's clerical staff, which, at the time, consisted of only four priests.

Bishop Provencher had already been a missionary in the Middle West nineteen years. He had been the choice of Bishop Plessis in 1818. Four years later, May 12, 1822, sorely against his will, he had been consecrated titular Bishop of Juliopolis and Auxiliary to the Bishop of Quebec, in order that he might the better continue and strengthen the work of the Church in the West. Bishop Provencher was not only the pastor of his people, teaching the doctrines of eternal life, but he was their father as well. In every respect he deserves to be called the Apostle of Central Canada.

It was early in June when Father Demers arrived in the mission land so longed for. The journey had been of the usual kind with fair weather and foul; with rain and fog and wind. Whenever the weather was too bad the brigade would camp ashore and await better conditions. Occasionally, too, some unfortunate canoe would have an accident—the great weakness of birch-bark canoes was that they were so easily damaged. The voyageurs were prepared for such an emergency. They had a supply of birch bark and gum. This gum was a resinous substance made by boiling the pitch from pine trees; when pressed along the seams it hardened and made them waterproof. The fiber from the roots of spruce or cedar, known as wattap, was used to sew the pieces of bark together.

But all the activity of the journey was put into liveliest action at the portages. Portages! What tales of brawn and brain they can tell! During two hundred years they saw great strength exercised in the overland transportation of boats and freight on man's shoulders, from one navigable river to another or past the rapids or waterfalls. To avoid the rapids, the rowing stopped some twenty or thirty feet from shore, because a nearer approach, in which the canoe might graze the pebbles, would cause leaks. The rowers then jumped into the water, and,



steadying the boat by holding it at each end, deftly beached it. Then the unloading began.

Mr. Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822 to 1835, one of a party of twenty on a tour of inspection of the forts, has left us a vivid description of a portage. In his time it must have been the custom to begin every important noun with a capital letter. In the print of today the peculiar style lends a decorative effect to a page.

He begins: "The manner of carrying a Canoe. She is first turned over; four men then go into the water—two at each end and raise the Canoe, and two place themselves amidships of the Gunwhale on the opposite side. The weight of our Canoe, which was an express one was about six cwt. (this must mean including freight).

"The Goods are carried in this manner; each canoe-man is provided with a leather Sling, broad in the middle; the Ends he fastens to a Package; this is placed on his shoulders—the broad part of the Sling is placed across his Forehead. On this Package a second is placed; in this manner they generally carry two Packages of ninety pounds each and sometimes a third.

"The Ceremony of Encampment is that the moment we land a Fire is made; the Tent raised, the kettle put on the Fire, and in the short span of a quarter of an Hour your inn is prepared.

"Our Tent is about thirty feet by fifteen feet of canvas, handsomely striped in paint at the top. An oilcloth is placed as a Carpet; this forms the covering of the Tent when packed. Our Boxes and Cassettes (grips) become our chairs and tables. After Supper this is cleared and our Beds are spread. First, Canvas, which forms the Cover of the Bed and our Seat in the Canoe. Then a Bed of Blankets sewn together, which form an Article of Trade in the Interior. On these, two fine Blankets as sheets, and above this a colored Blanket as Coverlet.

"The Fire is kept up all Night for the purpose of boiling the men's Dinner which consists in Indian Corn and Pork, from which they are called Porkers. We camp at sunset and breakfast at eight."

Thank you, Mr. Garry, for this interesting account! The scene thus described is representative of what took place at each of the portages. It was repeated ninety-eight times from Lachine to St. Boniface. All these were southern portages—thirty-six from Lachine to Lake Superior; thirty-six from there to Rainy Lake, and twenty-six more to Lake Winnipeg. They all had French names. The northern portages to York Factory numbering thirty-two were known under English names.

The portages varied in length from ten yards to three-fourths of a mile—some extended even to nine miles—such was the Grand Portage at the head of Lake Superior. Whether they were long or short the same process of beaching the canoes, emptying them of their average three tons of freight, loading the packs on the voyageurs and transporting them over the portages had to be repeated.

Grand Portage, on the shore of Lake Superior, was the depot where the canoes from the fur country met those from Lachine and exchanged cargoes. The trade goods from Montreal were unloaded from the heavy canoes and packed over the portage to be loaded again in the light canoes for the Up Country. This second brigade may be said to have started at Rainy Lake, on to Athabasca, the Eldorado of the fur trade. In 1800 the difficult crossing over Grand Portage was obviated by opening a new route at Fort William.

Nature in the far north, as though not to let itself be outdone by the south, had its Mythe Portage or Portage la Loche, twelve miles long. This portage has been perpetuated in song and story as the racking portage, the ultimate test of the voyageur. It lay between Ile-a-la-Crosse Lake and Clearwater River.

In every case, the passengers in the brigades, naturally, had to walk over the portages, and it was hard walking. Allowing for stretches of partially beaten roads gone over but once a year, other difficulties remained, such as marshes to wade through in which one often sank knee-deep in mire; hills to climb; boulders to skirt along, ledges overlooking precipices to cling to.

Often there were fatal accidents to the voyageurs. Crosses

marked the trail where any of their number had met death. Passing the crosses, the voyageurs always took off their caps, made the sign of the Cross and said a short prayer. Misery and exposure also took its toll of passengers. One of our later missionaries on the way to Vancouver Island died on the route in consequence of the hardships.

By such long hazardous journeys, conducted by supermen, the fur trade made the wealth and fame of New France for some two hundred years.

### TO FIELDS AFAR

O canoe on the quiet river, how fragile a barque you seem!  
The soft dip, dip of your paddle seems scarcely to ripple the stream,  
As forward peacefully plying, silently swiftly through  
The placid and limpid waters you swing towards lands ever new.

O canoe on the raging river, a bubble craft you seem,  
A joy on the seething waters that race in the moon's pale beam!  
Through the rip and roar of rapids, through canyons black and  
bold,

Through rift and swirling eddy, your darkling way you hold.

O canoe now rhythmically swaying to your paddle's soft low song,  
And now so bravely battling with surging billows strong,  
How like is your changing passage to the course of a human soul,  
As it travels the River of God, to God, its ultimate goal!

O Soul on the River of God! the way is strange and long,  
Yet fling your pennon out, and spread your canvas strong;  
For though to mortal eyes, so small a craft you seem,  
The highest Star in Heaven doth lend you a guiding gleam.

O Soul on the River of God! look to your course with care,  
Fear most when winds are kind, and skies are blue and fair,  
Your helm must sway at touch of no hand save your own,  
The soul that sails the River of God must sail alone.

O Soul on the River of God! sail on with steady aim,  
Unmoved by winds of praise, untouched by seas of blame.  
Beyond the lonely wastes, beyond the guiding star,  
There stretches out the Strand and the Golden Harbor Bar.

S. M. S.—S. S. A.

---

## CHAPTER IV

---

### THROUGH ALIEN CHANNELS

THE fur commerce with all that it connotes of people engaged in it—the corps of clerks, traders, factors, officials, and others at its forts; the trappers, the voyageurs, the Indians and halfbreeds who supplied the furs and brought in general commodities—all had been in steady operation decade after decade. And yet there had been no resident nor circulating priest in all the far western country. Nevertheless, the Hudson's Bay Company deserves much praise for its moral and religious policy. At a time when in Europe and in the thirteen American Colonies religious intolerance prevailed, the Hudson's Bay Company in its isolated Northern Empire promoted religion and its co-related benefit of civilization. Everyone under its control enjoyed unhampered freedom of conscience.

The Company made regulations relating to Sunday services and to the training of women and children in useful occupations. The training also called for preparatory education in the father's vernacular—whether French or English. Other regulations read as follows:

“Resolved first, that for the moral and religious improvement of the servants—H. B. C.—and more effectual civilization and instruction of the families attached to the different establishments, and of the Indians, that every Sunday divine service be publicly read with becoming solemnity, once or twice a day, at which every man, woman and child resident will be required to attend, together with any of the Indians who may be at hand, and whom it may be proper to invite.

“Resolved, second, that in the course of the week, due attention be bestowed to furnish the women and children such regular and useful occupations as are suited to their age and



capacity, and best calculated to suppress vicious, and promote virtuous habits.

"Resolved, third, as a preparation to education that the mother and children be always addressed and habituated to converse in the vernacular dialect, whether English or French, of the father, and that he be encouraged to devote part of his leisure hours to teaching the children their A.B.C.'s and catechism."

Those practical regulations were promulgated long before the arrival of the missionaries in the Red River Settlement. That they were not only pen and ink formulae was shown by the generous support the Company gave to the missionaries irrespective of belief. With the movement for colonization that opened in the beginning of the nineteenth century, missions sprang up so quickly that by 1857 there were forty-two held by different denominations between the Lower St. Lawrence and Oregon. Each of these received an annual sum averaged on its works; the lowest amount was two hundred and fifty dollars. The Catholic mission at Red River was included in the majority which received five hundred dollars annually.

Over and above, the Company gave free passage on its ships and brigades to the missionaries whenever it was possible to accommodate them. Such generosity greatly facilitated their extensive travels, and especially the travels of Father Demers for he covered more territory than any other missionary of his time.

Sir George Simpson, first governor of the united companies, not only contributed to the missionary cause by giving personal support to native schools, but he recommended his officers to keep on "good terms with the ministers of religion."

With a sense of the fitness of things, he wrote to the factors and those in authority at the forts: "Pray take care that there be no drunken scenes at any time, more especially during the visit of missionaries and strangers."

The helpful, broad-minded course taken by the Company to encourage religion among those within the compass of its trade, was further consolidated in 1818. God's instrument in

bringing this about was Lord Selkirk, a British nobleman. This great man's heart and mind teemed with philanthropic plans for relieving distress among the people of England, Scotland and Ireland in the beginning of the nineteenth century. To this end he organized immigration movements in the direction of Rupert's Land. At first he met disappointment in not being allowed a settlement in that region, for the British government forbade the establishing of a colony on the shores of Lake Winnipeg as being detrimental to the fur trade.

But Lord Selkirk had a marvelous spirit of enterprise and the enthusiasm of a man of thirty, and with wealth and influence at his command, he was not long deterred from his benevolent project. He directed his first colonists, numbering eight hundred, to take up residence on a strip of land on the coast of Prince Edward Island. This first colony gave the noble lord very little trouble. Within two years the settlement showed signs of thrift and prosperity. Some four thousand people on the Island trace their origin to the three shiploads that came over in 1803, while many in the Canadian West call themselves Lord Selkirk's Islanders.

The establishment of a colony on Prince Edward Island was a mere issue in Lord Selkirk's schemes of emigration. He next purchased a tract of land in Upper Canada near Lake St. Clair, which he named Baldoon; and another in the township of Moulton near the mouth of the Grand River. These were still but first attempts leading to further expansion on a broader scale.

Always dominated with the idea of bettering the lot of the lower classes in the British Isles, the kind-hearted peer bought one hundred and ten thousand square miles of land in Rupert's Land, lying east and west of the Red River. On this he bound himself to settle a large colony within a limited time, and to bear the expense of transportation. Among the advantages set forth in the advertisement and prospectus of the colony which invited emigrants to join the enterprise, was the declaration that the *greatest freedom of religious opinion* was to be allowed. This, at the time, was rather a unique concession.

Consistent with this policy, the noble lord received all applicants regardless of creed. He placed Captain Miles Macdonnell, a Catholic, at the head of the expedition. Of course, the choice did not rest solely on the captain's religion, but on his firmness and experience as well. He had been an officer in the King's Royal Regiment in the War of American Independence, and now held the rank of Captain in the Canadian militia. But the choice was none the less a credit to the colonizer's fairmindedness for he did not let the captain's faith stand in the way of his appointment as leader of the colonists and governor of the pioneer settlement.

Moreover, a Catholic chaplain, Father Charles Bourke, went with the motley band of emigrants who sailed from the Hebrides on July 26, 1811, and who reached York Factory on September 24.

That those willing to join an enterprise are not always qualified to meet its requirements is borne out by the fact that Father Bourke, though zealous for the interests of the colony, did not fit as chaplain. He did not continue with the party to their destination, but returned to Ireland by the next boat the following year.

The presence of a Catholic chaplain with the first contingent of settlers bound for Red River, shows that the Catholic percentage was worthy of attention. However, many historians ignore this fact, and claim that Scotch sectarians alone comprised the emigrants of 1811-1813.

Scripture tells us that when a man enters the service of God, he must prepare for combat. This principle applies to distinterested men who work on the lines of righteousness for the welfare of humanity. Lord Selkirk experienced this in carrying out his laudable immigration scheme. He met with opposition that appears irrational today. The strongest opposition came from the Northwest Fur Company. So afraid was this organization of losing its own supremacy in the fur territory that it thwarted the movement and persecuted its members with all the resources in its power.

Through adversity of every kind, then, in spite of the wiles of men and the cruelty of seasons, Manitoba, "the Queen of the Prairies," emerged—a monument to the courage, the far-sightedness and the wisdom of Lord Selkirk, the undaunted colonizer. He is remembered among the Indians as "Silver Chief." His name, too, though he was not of the faith, stands to the fore for laying the foundation of the Catholic Church in the Northwest.

So thorough and deep-thinking a colonizer duly estimated the value of religious influence over individuals and masses. Six years had passed since the colonization scheme had been set on foot. The overseas immigrant parties and individual comers, plus the French Canadian and half-breed families in the employ of the Fur Companies, and the Meurons—that is, the German, French, Swiss and Italian disbanded soldiers who received grants from Lord Selkirk for helping in the recapture of two forts—all these now formed a nucleus of about seven hundred souls in the Red River Valley. Sheep without a shepherd, they were in sore need of priestly ministration.

Lord Selkirk, directed by that truly Catholic captain and governor, Miles Macdonnell, who had already appealed to the Bishop of Quebec for missionaries, wrote: "I am fully persuaded of the infinite good which might be effected by a zealous and intelligent ecclesiastic among these Canadian people in whom the sense of religion is almost entirely lost. It would give me great satisfaction to co-operate to the utmost of my power in so good a work; and if your Lordship will select a suitable person to undertake it, I can have no difficulty in assuring him of every accommodation and support which your Lordship may judge necessary."

This personal request was soon followed by a formal petition from the leading Catholics entreating the Bishop to send them priests. This petition, signed by twenty-three distinguished persons, and witnessed to by two French-Canadians, was, by the authority of Lord Selkirk, circulated in the colony.

Nothing better illustrates the sincerity of the Red River settlers in their request to have priests among them than the



incident recorded by John Murray Gibbon in *Canadian Mosaics*, "The father of a clan issuing from the marriage of Jean Baptiste Lagimodiere and Marie-Anne Gaboury—now comprising four thousand descendants—was sent with despatches from old Fort Douglas on the Red River to Lord Selkirk in Montreal in 1815, travelling in the heart of winter this distance of 1800 miles, equipped only with snowshoes, a gun, an axe and a blanket, in order to warn Lord Selkirk of the conflict between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Nor-Westers. On being asked what recompense he wished for this journey, he is said to have answered: 'Priests for our country—give us priests as soon as possible!'"

As was to be expected of a true shepherd of Christ's flock who felt the responsibility of the spiritual jurisdiction over the vast unorganized Canadian regions, the Bishop gave the petition his immediate attention. And not without need, for owing to the rivalry between the Hudson's Bay and the North-west Companies, the territory was in a ferment of trouble. The whites and half-breeds of the opposing factions outdid each other in acts of violence. As Father Morice says, "All Canada was afire with the reports of the atrocities committed in the Up Country (*Le pays d'en haut*)."

The situation was not inviting. The holiest in the army of Christ are but human; they may flinch when the voice of authority says "Forward," but they obey. And this is what Father Joseph Norbert Provencher did when his Bishop's choice fell on him for the great task of founding the Church in what today is the province of Manitoba. Here he arrived with Father S. Joseph Dumoulin on June 16, 1818. Since that day, the Church in the Red River Valley has known many vicissitudes, but the gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

Four years after his arrival in the Northland, Father Provencher was consecrated bishop of the titular see of Juliopolis. For a period of thirty-five years, 1818-1853, he labored as only an apostle can labor for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in that country. His elevation to the episcopacy created a line of communication between the hier-

archy in Quebec and the people connected with the fur trade in Oregon.

But what had Canada, a British possession, to do with Oregon, a United States territory? This: The fur trade that had started in the lands bordering on the St. Lawrence kept extending northward and westward until the Hudson's Bay Company reached New Caledonia—definitely British, and Oregon—indefinitely so. Nobody cared. Oregon, which a hundred years ago extended from California to Alaska, had no value in the eyes of the government except for its furs. The Hudson's Bay people hunted there at will and established one of their greatest forts on the Columbia. The whole management of the Company, though British in name, was Canadian in fact. The governor in charge and the men in the service hailed from Lower Canada (*le pays d'en bas*). Canadian French was spoken by the officials, the trappers and in the homes of the half-breed families.

But in time the question arose: "Who's who in this place?" A long dispute followed which threatened war between England and the United States. At last, in 1846, the better judgment of both nations prevailed—where it so seldom does in matters of "mine" and "thine" and a peaceful adjustment was made.

In 1834 and 1835, when the Canadians in Willamette Valley sent petitions to Bishop Provencher, as the nearest medium to whom they could apply for missionaries, the contest for the boundary was very heated. The Hudson's Bay officers began to sense that they would have to move much farther north. Governor Simpson in granting permission to the missionaries to come into the country insisted that they locate themselves north of the Columbia. The Company may, at the time, have considered it possible British territory.

Missionaries a hundred years ago were then, as now, at a premium. That they were not easily available is seen by Bishop Provencher's reply to Dr. John McLoughlin, Governor of the Oregon Territory, and in his pastoral letter to the Willamette

petitioners. Both letters are dated from Red River, June 6, 1836. To Dr. McLoughlin the Bishop writes:

"Sir, I received last winter and this spring petitions from certain free families settled on the Willamette River, requesting that missionaries be sent to instruct them and their children. My intention is to do all I can to comply with their request as soon as possible.

"I have no priests at my disposal at Red River, but I am going to Europe this year and I will endeavor to procure the means of making God known to those people and to the Indians.

"These people say that they are protected by you. Please induce them to do their best that they may derive benefit from the favor they implore."

The Bishop's pastoral letter to the petitioners was addressed "to all the families settled in the Willamette Valley, and to other Catholics beyond the Rocky Mountains." Its first paragraph repeats what he had said in his letter to the Governor, and adds that their request had touched his heart, and that if it were in his power he would grant it at once.

As the Indians entered largely into the plan of evangelization, the zealous Bishop at once espoused their cause. "My intention," he writes, "is not only to procure the knowledge of God for you and your children, but also for the numerous Indian tribes among whom you live. What idea do you give them of God and the religion you profess when they see in you who call yourselves servants of that God, disorders which equal or perhaps surpass their own?"

The good Bishop exhorts them to deserve by their good behavior that God may bless his efforts in securing priests for "whom they seem to pray so earnestly."

Like a true pastor instructing his flock, he gives them domestic advice. "My dear brethren, bring up your children the best way you can. Teach them what you know of religion. Remember that the proper means of conveying some notion of God, and of the religion you profess, is to give good example to your wives and children. May God touch your hearts and

change them, and dispose you to profit by the instructions and other religious assistance which the missionaries will bring you."

Strong words these, but it is not the custom of Catholic pastors to minimize the moral teachings of Catholic truth.

Nearly three years passed before anything was accomplished although there was much correspondence between the Hudson's Bay Governor and the committee in London, and the bishops of Quebec and St. Boniface. At length, matters being satisfactorily arranged, Bishop Provencher made application for the passage of two priests with the Hudson's Bay Brigade. We quote in full Sir George Simpson's answer to this request. It was written from Hudson's Bay House, London, February 17, 1838.

"The Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Interior, to His Lordship the Bishop of Quebec:

"Yesterday I had the honor of receiving a letter from the Bishop of Juliopolis, dated Red River, October 13, 1837, wherein I am requested to communicate with your Lordship on the subject of sending two priests to the Columbia River for the purpose of opening a Catholic mission in that part of the country.

"When the Bishop first mentioned this subject, his view was to form the mission on the banks of the Willamette, a river falling into the Columbia from the south. To the establishment of a Mission there, the Governor and Committee in London, and the Council in Hudson's Bay, have a decided objection, as the sovereignty of that country is still undecided.

"Last summer I intimated to the Bishop that if he would establish the Mission on the banks of the Cowlitz River, or on the Cowlitz portage falling into the Columbia from the northward, and give the assurance that the missionaries would not locate themselves on the south side of the Columbia River, but would form their establishment where the Company's representative might point out as the most eligible situation on the north side, I should recommend the Governor and the Committee to afford passage to the priests, and such facilities to-



wards the successful accomplishment of the object in view, as would not involve any great inconvenience, or expense to the Company's service.

"By the letter received yesterday, already alluded to, the Bishop enters fully into my views, and expresses his willingness to fall in with my suggestions.

"That letter I have laid before the Governor and the Committee, and am now instructed to intimate to Your Lordship that if the priests will be ready at Lachine to embark for the interior, about the 25th of April, a passage will be afforded them, and on arrival at Fort Vancouver, measures will be taken by the Company's representative, to facilitate the establishing of the Mission and the carrying into effect the object thereof generally.

"I have the honor to be, My Lord,

"Your Lordship's obedient servant,

"GEORGE SIMPSON."

John said:

Master, we saw a man casting out devils  
in Thy name  
and we forbade him  
because he followeth not with us.  
And Jesus said to him:  
"Forbid him not:  
for he that is not against you  
is for you."

The stipulation about establishing the mission on the particular bank of the Cowlitz, and positively not on the southern bank of the Columbia, was so much energy wasted, for five years later the Company shifted the seat of its trade to Victoria on Vancouver Island.

For the weight of the influence which his important position as commander-in-chief of the Hudson's Bay Company brought to bear on the establishing of the Catholic missions in Oregon, Sir George Simpson, the writer of the letter quoted above, is entitled to the grateful remembrance of generations

of the faithful on this northwest Pacific coast. The central figure in the two-century-old company which he so ably represented for forty years, Sir George Simpson was consistently courteous, helpful and obliging to missionaries. He deserves more than passing notice both for his sponsoring of religion and for his manifold qualifications.

At thirty-five he was appointed governor of the northern department of Rupert's Land and the far Columbia,—a territory which, it is said, Bonaparte might have envied. The "Little Emperor" might also have envied Sir George's compact five feet seven inches of height, and his well-knit, broad-chested frame. He would certainly have admired the Scotchman's strong clear intellect, his buoyant strength and his profound understanding of men.

Simpson's appointment to the leadership of the fur trade was made in 1821 on the amalgamation of the rival companies: the Northwest, controlled from Montreal, and the Hudson's Bay, controlled from London.

Both parties understood that a man of great ability and tact was required to harmonize opposing members and conflicting methods. If those who had to make the choice could have made a manager to order, they would have endowed him with "quick perceptions, good judgment, patient temper, natural astuteness, attractive and affable manner, a plausible tongue, intellect, of course,—a keen and firm gentlemanly man." The list of requisitions almost takes away our breath. Not only personality but nationality had also to be considered.

"He must be of British rather than of Canadian ancestry in order that the Hudson's Bay Company might be satisfied, and yet preferably of Scotch origin, to gain the confidence of the strong Celtic element which largely made up the Northwest Company."

The most minute details were specified in the make-up of this desirable governor, even "that he should have visited the fur country, and yet not to have there lost his business habits."

Extravagant as all these requirements sound when demanded in one individual, they were actually found welded in

Sir George Simpson who stands out as "the most vital, arresting furtrader, merchant, prince and statesman in the whole history of the Country."

It is important to know that with the union of the two companies, the center of trade was changed from York Factory on Hudson Bay to Norway House on the North side of Lake Winnipeg. From this time on, too, the brigades all left from the eastern depot at Lachine. It is on record that this energetic governor of the furland, Sir George Simpson, left from there, in the interests of the trade, thirty times northwest bound. He traveled in an express canoe with a few passengers. How many times there were missionaries with him we do not know, but Father Lafleche, speaking of his own trip to Red River in 1844, says, "There were two canoes at our disposal. Bishop Provencher, who was on his tenth trip, occupied one with Governor Simpson; Father Bourassa and myself were in the other."

It may be taken for granted that if Sir George Simpson gave free passage to three missionaries at once, this was not an isolated case. Father Lafleche's description of their setting out is most colorful: "The weather was magnificent when amid the cheers of about three hundred people who had come to wish us God-speed, the horn sounded our departure at noon on Saturday, April 27th. Each canoe was manned by a picked crew, an Iroquois bowsman from Caughnawaga, a French Canadian steersman, and six French rowers unmatched the world over. Dressed in red shirts, trousers of rough serge, fastened with the gaudy, long-fringed Assumption belts, they were a picturesque sight. The fantastic effect was heightened in the governor's beautifully made birch-bark canoe, by the presence of his special Scotch piper in Highland kilts. The piper was as much a part of the personnel as the secretary and the cook.

"They all sang well and knew the whole repertoire of Canadian songs. All day long their tunes were a delightful break in the solitude. Hymns frequently mingled with the folk songs. The latter have no claim to poetry. Their great merit is in the beauty of their melody, the cadence of which is in perfect harmony with the strokes of the oars. This accord between voice

and action has the effect of doubling speed without apparent effort on the part of the oarsmen. So we sing as much to lighten the work as to satisfy devotion and enliven our joy."

We at this distant date feel the exhilaration of the dancing waters as the canoes leap over them to the lilt of the Canadian chansons, the lively strains of the bagpipes and the triumphant war songs of the Iroquois.



---

## CHAPTER V

---

### THE WESTERN BEACON

THE Bishop of Quebec having had transcontinental passage for two priests offered him (as explained in Sir George Simpson's letter), immediately appointed Father F. N. Blanchet vicar-general of the new mission field. At the same time he informed him that, subject to the approval of Bishop Provencher, his companion would be Father Modeste Demers who had the previous year been sent to the Red River Settlement.

Bishop Signay had, no doubt, a knowledge of the wide range of qualifications in the priests of his large diocese; but he must have had some intuition of Father Blanchet's missionary tendencies since he chose him from among all the priests of Montreal to be the standard-bearer of our Holy Religion to the extreme West.

Acting in the full power of his episcopal jurisdiction, the Bishop outlined instructions for the two missionaries. The territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean to which he appointed these men of God, was part of his Quebec diocese. His instructions come under seven headings. Each of them is fraught with appalling difficulties. For instance: "My Reverend Fathers, you must consider as the first object of your mission to withdraw from barbarism and the disorders which it produces, the Indians scattered in that country." A lifetime of heroic self-denial and infinite patience and labor are involved in that one exhortation.

But the first is followed by another which is equally overwhelming. "Your second object is to render your services to the wicked Christians who have adopted the vices of the Indians and who live in licentiousness and the forgetfulness of their duties."

On the surface, the next injunction seems easy, but it is

really not so easy when its success depends as much on the exercise of exquisite tact as on the grace of God. It is this: "Persuaded that the preaching of the Gospel is the surest means of obtaining these happy results, you will lose no opportunity of inculcating its principles and maxims, neither in your private conversations nor in public instructions."

The fourth advice is more personal: "In order," he says, "to make yourselves useful as soon as possible to the natives of the country where you are sent, you will at once apply yourselves to study the Indian languages, and will endeavor to reduce them to regular principles so as to be able to publish a grammar after some years of residence there."

"You will prepare for baptism the heathen women who live in concubinage with Christians, in order to substitute with as little delay as possible, lawful marriages for these irregular unions.

"You will take particular care of the Christian education of children, establishing for that purpose schools and catechism classes in all the villages you will have occasion to visit.

"In all places remarkable for their position, the passage of the voyageurs or the gatherings of Indians, you will erect crosses so as to take possession of them in the name of the Catholic religion.

"Given at Quebec, April 17, 1838,

"† Joseph Signay, Bishop of Quebec."

In the sequel it will be shown how faithfully the two missionaries followed these directions. Exception was made of that order which tells them to prepare a grammar for publication. This was made impossible by the long hours spent in active ministry.

Being thus authorized for the apostolic mission by government and by ecclesiastical power, Father F. N. Blanchet went to Lachine to embark with the brigade in the early spring of 1838.

With a mighty effort, the rivers had now freed themselves from the ice-fetters that had held them rigidly bound for five

months. On the St. Lawrence, in the Lachine Canal, everything is a-bustle. Thirty big canoes are being loaded with a year's supply of strictly essential commodities for the Up Country. The freight—four tons to a canoe—is in place, the passengers seat themselves in the middle of the vessel. They try to fit, but they must allow room for the long strokes of the rowers.

In a certain canoe, somewhat apart from the others, for it is the Express of the Hudson's Bay Company, two passengers of note embark: one is Chief Trader Hargrave, the leader of the brigade: the other is the Reverend F. N. Blanchet, the vicar-general, on his way to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River.

A bugle sounds. One hundred eighty pairs of oars are raised on high, two hundred forty voices break into a lively chorus, the oars strike the waters and thirty canoes dart up toward the Ottawa River. The Hudson's Bay Brigade is launched once more on its annual journey to the rich fur lands of Canada.

From the porch of his mansion at the head of the canal, Sir George Simpson stands watching the proceedings. The two-story stone building is the residence of the Hudson's Bay governor. The company had purchased it for the use of its chief official from Mr. William Gordon in 1833. Its only occupant in that capacity was Sir George Simpson, for, when he died in 1860, the fur trade had dwindled and receded, so that a new organization made the Lachine depot useless.

The words of Agnes C. Laut were being verified: "We shall witness the gradual stubborn and unwilling retreat of the fur trade before the onmarching settler, until at last the Dominion Government will take over the vast domain known as Rupert's Land, and the Company founded by the courtiers of King Charles and given full sway over an empire, will fall to the status of an ordinary organization." This being so, the Company had no further use for the mansion, and a year after the passing away of Sir George, it was bought by the Sisters of Saint Ann, and used as their Mother-House and Novitiate.

The Sisters always appreciated the "Governor's House," and never called it by any other name. The novitiate of the Order was on the second story. It consisted of two well-lighted

rooms of equal size; one was the living room, the other, the classroom. On the landing was the office of the Reverend Mother General. The garret answered the purpose of an infirmary.

Novices are up and doing, and that not always in a prayerful manner. To instance an experience of my own during those eventful days: One day my joy-twin and partner in peccadillos (and an English aristocrat at that) said, "Let us go and see the wine cellar!"

See a wine cellar! How the invitation stirred my American imagination stored with the literature of that day—all about the lives of English lords and ladies, their butlers and their wine cellars! I peeped in, half scared. I need not have been, for there were only some tubs there. Even now, after these sixty-odd years, I remember the feeling of awe I experienced when I stood in that vault with its empty racks for bottles that were there no more.

Another place that I remember well is the stone building across the street. It had been the Company's storehouse where, within substantial walls, rich stores of furs were guarded. The Sisters converted, or perverted, the building into a laundry. It gave a sense of importance to our rub-rub in tubs to remember that they stood on the spot so recently stacked with bales of the wealth acquired by the Lords of the North.

Other traditional associations with the Governor's House are the departure from its porch of the nun-missionaries to the Pacific Coast. Band after band of Sisters of Saint Ann have left from this historic portico, westward bound to spend themselves in social and educational work in the Pacific North-West.

In the fifties, sixties and seventies, when the sisters first set out, the days of travel by the brigades were over. They went from coast to coast in comfortable steamships via the Panama railway.

But, for Father F. N. Blanchet, in 1838, there was no other way than the overland route by the brigade, or the ocean trip around Cape Horn. In a letter to his Bishop, Father Blanchet gives an account of his overland trip. No week-end pleasure



outing was that! "I left Lachine for St. Boniface, Red River, on May 3d, 1838, and arrived there on June 6th. We covered the distance of twenty-one hundred miles in thirty-three days, or 488 hours of forced marches. The dangers and hardships of this long canoe journey are well known. To spend days, and often nights—when these are favorable—in an uncomfortable position, to undergo the inclemency of seasons, the gusts of wind and the torrential rains; to run down numberless rapids at the peril of one's life, or to travel on foot through the forests, rocks and ponds of some of the portages; to camp out in damp cold places; to devour in haste a scanty meal badly prepared; to stop at different posts inhabited by whites and visited by Indians for the administration of the Sacraments, the visitation of the sick and the exhortation of poor sinners—such, My Lord, is the life of the missionaries on their way to the far North-west."

After these general notes, Father Blanchet's itinerary reads like a guidebook: "Our canoe was eight days on the Ottawa. A day upstream brought us to a three mile portage. At its summit, the waters of the Ottawa are divided from those flowing into Lake Nipissing. After the portage, a day down a little river led us into Lake Nipissing. It took twenty-four hours to cross it. At the end of the lake there was another portage and a stream—the French River. Through this the lake discharges its waters into Lake Huron. We were three days crossing it over to Sault Ste. Marie, and six and a half from there to Fort William on Lake Superior.

"Leaving Lake Superior, we ascended the Tiministiquia River for three days up to a portage nine miles long. This is the height which divides the waters running into Lake Superior from those flowing into Lake Winnipeg, on to Hudson Bay. After the long march over the portage, we embarked at the source of the river Des Embarras which flows into the Milles Lacs. Crossing this and Rainy Lake, we reached the fort of that name. This part of the trip from the height had lasted five days. It took three more days to go down the Rainy River, to cross the Lake of the Woods; three to go down the Winni-

peg, one to go over the Lake and another day to ascend the Red River to St. Boniface, the residence of the Bishop of Juliopolis.

“The party of Canadians, Iroquois, Mr. Hargrave and myself were completely exhausted. And with good reason. Often we had left camp at one in the morning, and encamped only between seven and eight in the evening. We had been exposed to great danger in the middle of lakes, or in coming down or going up rapids. The current often set our canoe adrift on hidden rocks, and once our small bark was nearly dashed to pieces on one of them. The mournful crosses seen above and below the rapids are signs of the dangers encountered in these treacherous places.”

With the reverend diarist we feel the relief of his having reached this oasis on the first part of his journey across Canada. What joy awaited him here in the meeting of compatriots, of kindred souls, all eager for the extension of God's kingdom—six of them—Bishop Provencher and Fathers Thibeault, Poiré, Belcourt, Demers, and himself. Such a gathering of priests had never been seen in those remote regions. But it was not to last long. Father Poiré left after a few days to accompany a caravan of eight or nine hundred wagons on a buffalo hunt.

Father Blanchet, after having rested for five weeks and visited the missions of the Red River, left with Father Demers for their final destination—Oregon. That was the beacon which drew them onwards on the wings of desire; that was the signal which impelled them forward to announce the tidings of great joy. Besides, had they not been invited there by repeated requests from the people and the intercession of Bishop Provencher? On this had been set the seal of their own Bishop's approval, and they had also the co-operation of the rulers of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company.

Twenty-six Canadian families of the Willamette Valley and four in Cowlitz, besides the majority of the servants dispersed in the twenty-eight fur-trade posts in Oregon, were Catholic—at least in name. The faith implanted at the parent knee in Lower Canada made them crave the succor of their holy re-



*By Courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company*

## THE PARTING OF THE BRIGADES





ligion. While those of other denominations were attended by as many as thirty ministers, the Catholics were without clergymen of their creed. These motives had actuated them to send petitions that, after long waiting, brought the desired promise. And now came the great news that two missionaries were on their way to them.

Yes, so it was! All being now ready for the continuation of their journey from St. Boniface, the missionaries set out on July 10, 1838. By a happy coincidence their departure was in the month which Canadians consecrate to Good Saint Ann, the patroness of their country. They placed themselves under her special protection by singing a High Mass in her honor.

Name unto Mary dear,  
Blessed Saint Ann,  
Name Christians love to hear,—  
The good Saint Ann.

Forward! Westward! It is the great day. Let us again assist at a going forth of a Hudson's Bay Brigade. This one is destined for one of the longest journeys,—seventy-nine days, mostly by water, from St. Boniface to the Rockies, a five days' cavalcade trip over them, then six days down the Columbia in bateaux—in all a journey twice as momentous as that already made from Lachine to Red River.

The voyageurs, the traders, the passengers, the two priests with their precious portable altars, take their appointed places in eleven light canoes. The freight is securely packed, but in such a way as to be quickly removed, hauled over the portages and placed in the canoes again.

Among those present to see the brigade off is Bishop Provencher. He is reluctant to bid good-by to Father Demers, whose genuine missionary qualities he had learned to value during the year they had worked together in St. Boniface, but he is glad to contribute so worthy a helper to the foundation of the Church on the other side of the Rocky Mountains.

Ready! For an instant the oars gleam in the sun, then with

the rapidity of lightning they strike the glistening waters of the Red River. It is the setting for "The Red River Voyageur";

Out and in the river is winding  
The links of its long red chain,  
Through belts of dusky pine-land  
And gusty leagues of plain.  
The voyageur smiles as he listens  
To the sound that grows apace—  
To the bells of the Roman Mission  
That call from their turrets twain  
To the boatman on the river,  
To the hunter on the plain.

The two missionaries were now well launched on the way to the territory where they would be the first to offer earth's infinite homage to its Creator in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. They would be the first to make known the Redeemer of mankind, the first to mark the land with His symbol, the Cross. With their coming, lakes and rivers, hills and valleys, forests and plains, would resound with the holy name of Jesus. They, and we, are justified in calling them the "first" because history has no record of this part of America's having been visited by priests, nor is there any tradition to open up the subject for investigation.

In presence of these two heralds of the faith we say in a transport of pride in the continuity of our holy religion,

The Apostles are dead,  
Long live the Apostles!  
Holy Faith, we'll be true to thee till death.

---

## CHAPTER VI

---

### WESTWARD EVER WESTWARD

**A**FTER seven days of dangerous navigation, three hundred ninety miles north from St. Boniface, the brigade reached Norway House, the Hudson's Bay depot of the fur trade. It will be remembered that this place had become the virtual capital for traders when the Nor'westers gave up the seat of their operations at Grand Portage, or Fort William. It is doubtful whether Norway House ever saw the bustling activity enacted at the fort at the head of Lake Superior. There traders from the Upper Country met those from the Lower Country once a year to the number of one thousand. These meetings were celebrations between the parties from "*le pays d'en haut*," and "*le pays d'en bas*,"—and perhaps they were rather boisterous!

Our travelers spent eight days at Norway House. They were days full of apostolic ministering,—baptizing, instructing, distributing catechisms and exhorting both whites and Indians. The Fathers also witnessed two marriages and baptized a few adults. On Sunday they offered Holy Mass,—one a High Mass, in the apartment set aside for the governor, and, on this occasion, given to the priests for lodging and chapel use. Vespers were sung and two sermons preached. Some of the gentlemen and clerks in the Company's employ assisted at these offices.

### THE PARTING OF THE BRIGADES

After the union of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company in 1821, the former took over the posts of "The Master Pedlars" in the Columbia (Oregon Territory) and New Caledonia (British Columbia) districts where the two Companies had not previously been in competition. George Simpson, newly appointed Governor, soon found that these were unprofitable establishments, because of the difficult routes for transportation.

The recognized route to New Caledonia was by way of the Churchill River, Athabaska River and north to Lesser Slave Lake, then by the Peace and Parsnip Rivers, and by horse to Fort George and the posts on the Fraser River. The principal article of trade was leather.

When Governor Simpson made his journey to the Pacific in 1824 he went with the Columbia Brigade up the Saskatchewan to Edmonton and by horse to Fort Assiniboine on the Athabaska River, then by canoe to Henry House. From there, by pack horse, Simpson crossed the Athabasca Pass, by the Committee's Punch Bowl to Boat Encampment at the junction of the Canoe and Columbia Rivers and down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver.

While on this journey Simpson planned changing the route of the brigades for New Caledonia from Churchill to the Saskatchewan because of the ease of the waterway and the abundance of game. He learned from the natives at Boat Encampment that it was possible to go up the Canoe River in half sized canoes, portage to the headwaters of the Fraser River and down to Fort George in about ten days.

He then planned that the brigade instead of following the Peace River route to the Pacific should accompany the Columbia express along the Saskatchewan ". . . from Edmonton cross over to Fort Assiniboine . . . then proceed . . . to Henry's House in the mountains . . . and thence proceed over the Athabasca Pass." Hudson's Bay Company calendar, 1833.

On July 26th, the brigade, increased by several small bands of travelers, resumed its journey to the Rockies, under command of Chief Factor Mr. John Rowand, who, next to Sir George Simpson, was then the most conspicuous and influential man in the fur land. Friendly, indulgent, warm-hearted to all, Mr. Rowand's Catholic instinct made him doubly so towards missionaries. For all that, he was more ready to fight for his Church outside its doors than to kneel for its services inside of them. Father Blanchet tells us, however, that he and Father Demers will never forget his kindness and his constant efforts to alleviate the fatigue of the journey, and always with wit and humor.

It was said of him that he was the best qualified man in the



country for the troublesome job of dealing with the Indians. He had the faculty of attracting the fiercest tribes; and yet, although "he ruled them with a rod of iron, his generosity shone through his hard methods." "The boy is father of the man," and the boy readers of this story will enjoy this tale of Mr. Rowand's fearlessness. He had often bearded the Indian chiefs in the open camp while they were surrounded by their warriors. One day it was their turn. He was traveling on horseback over the plains, and at noon, while resting, he fell fast asleep. He was awakened by a party of two hundred Blackfeet, mounted and in full warpaint, who swept down with fearful yells upon his small party.

Was he terrified? Did he lose his presence of mind? Not he. Jumping to his feet, he ran out to meet the Indian band with uplifted arm. "Stop you villains!" he shouted.

One of the chiefs recognized him. That was enough. At his signal the warriors stood still,—all sorts of apologies followed. They had mistaken his men for Americans, so they explained. Thanks to his promptness and bravado, his scalp and that of his party did not go to adorn the belts of the Blackfeet Indians.

On August 15th, the feast of Our Lady's glorious Assumption into heaven, the missionaries sang High Mass at Fort Constant, in the presence of the Cree Indians of the neighborhood. On such occasions along the way one or the other of the priests could always be the choir to sing the responses, but at the forts there were Catholic French-Canadians familiar with the High Mass ceremonies at home, and happy to join in the singing.

As the brigade slowly advanced, one hundred eight miles to Fort Cumberland, and another two hundred sixty-four to Fort Carleton, with stops at each place, the missionaries continued to exercise their zeal. At Fort Carleton they administered thirty-six baptisms and witnessed seven marriages. Among those baptized were Mr. Patrick Small, the commander of the Fort, and his family.

The value of a soul—of the soul of a wee infant—who understands this as well as the missionary? Father Blanchet, making a difficult journey of two hundred seventy-nine miles

with oar, pole, sail and line, and over portages, too, makes this entry in his diary: "On the way we baptized a child who died an hour afterwards."

On September 6th the brigade arrived at Edmonton, the place for the parting of the Company—northwest to New Caledonia and southwest to the Columbia. At this point, the fleet of light canoes having followed the meanderings of the Saskatchewan River for six weeks, was dropped and a caravan of sixty horses formed.

On the travelers went through forests and prairies, crossing ponds and rivers and encountering beaver dams, the one hundred two miles to Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca River. Here the horses gave way to the boats for the seventeen days upstream against the rapids and dangers of the Athabasca River, and then again the boats were exchanged for horses. This time there were seventy-two of them. Wild and easily frightened they had a way all their own of ridding themselves of riders and luggage and of taking to the woods, or of running into ponds and mudholes.

From Jasper House to the Rockies the hardships were multiplied. In many places the pack and saddle horses had to jump fallen trees. In the foothills the leaps were particularly dangerous and the riders dismounted. In one day the caravan made its difficult way over thirteen of these hills.

Crossing the turbulent mountain rivers on horseback was, without doubt, a most fearsome experience and one that had often to be repeated, for our diarist tells us that on October 9th they crossed and recrossed the same river twenty-five times. At the "Hole," where the torrent is forty-five yards wide, the horses swam in water eighteen feet deep. Hanging on to the packs with which the horses were loaded, or to the horses' tails, the voyageurs had to swim across. The passengers were carried over in a canoe, brought from Jasper "with infinite trouble for that purpose."

On and on the travelers went, climbing hills and clambering over rocks overhanging awful chasms. Twice, this terrible and terrifying monotony was relieved by their going over

stretches of sandy beaches at the base of small mountains. And then through the region of waterfalls, snowbanks and glaciers, nearer and nearer to the formidable Athabasca Pass, which was reached on October 9th,—its four and a half miles scaled and camp pitched on its summit.

What a magnificent spectacle was displayed before the gaze of the caravan! All around was a vast sea of isolated mountains and abrupt peaks of all shapes. Some might be taken for perfect towers and beautiful turrets; others for strong castles and fortifications. In whatever direction the beholder turned his gaze, he marveled at the creative power of God.

O ye mountains and hills  
    bless the Lord  
Praise and exalt Him  
    above all, forever.

What place more sublime, what altar more fit for the offering of the most august sacrifice of human Redemption! Who, as truly as our two missionaries, could be alive to the grandeur and the obligation of paying supreme homage to the Almighty on these prodigious heights? And they did so. At three o'clock the next morning they offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For the first time since the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the words of Consecration brought Christ in His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, to take regal possession of these His own mountains. With what transports of thanksgiving for His wondrous creation, and for His choice of them to celebrate His praises there, did these holy priests hold the chalice of salvation in their hands saying

“What shall I render to the Lord  
For all that He hath rendered unto me?”

The most solemn act of our religion concluded, the missionaries could, and no doubt they did, with fresh courage, stand there, between earth and sky, and wave a last farewell to their homeland in the east; then, facing the west, they spread out their hands in benediction and cordiality to their unknown

brethren in the field portioned out to them for spiritual cultivation—and eagerly accepted.

This consecration of the Rocky Mountains to God, which marks an epoch in the Catholic Church in the West, took place on October 10, 1838.

Continuing their way over ponds, then along a swift and narrow current, the caravan came by a steep path to a gorge between Mounts Brown and Hooker. The gorge is a mile and a half wide. Halfway is a circular lake thirty yards in diameter called the "Punch Bowl." The waters of this lake communicate underground with two lateral lakes. Rivulets issue from each of the latter and flow in opposite directions. Fed by many trickling streams, they are the sources of two mighty rivers, the Frazer which empties into the Pacific, and the Athabasca which, passing through Athabasca and the Great Slave Lakes, falls into the Arctic Ocean at 69 north latitude.

The remark was made by Sir George Simpson, who may have been the first white man to discover the "Punch Bowl," "that this basin should send its waters to each side of the continent and give birth to two of the principal rivers of North America, is no less strange than true to Dr. McLoughlin and myself who have examined the currents flowing from it east and west. Through this tiny lake is the line which now separates British Columbia from Alberta."

If the horses and travelers of the light cavalry were exhausted at every point of the long hard way, what about the poor heavily burdened pack horses that took almost twice as long as the riding horses to reach the same point?

The western slope of the mountain is much steeper than the eastern. It was descended over boulders, fragments of rocks and trees to a portage where a halt was made a short distance from La Grande Cote. It took three hours to go down its zig-zag circuits; the first part was accomplished on horseback, the second on foot, and the third on horseback again. At length the caravan rested on a beautiful bush prairie. On the way the Portage River was crossed eight times, and twelve miles were made in five and a half hours.



Our diarist says, "On October 12th our horses walked through the mudholes of the great Timber Point. It took the laden animals eight hours to cover that six mile distance, because they had to be unloaded and loaded every now and then."

Traveling now became easier and more agreeable, and after walking over several points of woods and hills for six hours, they reached Boat Encampment on the right shore of the Portage River. It had taken three days to come down the western slope. The caravan was now in Oregon "the beautiful."

The word Oregon means "big ears," at least so we are told by Dr. George Haggart, a London gentleman versed in Spanish, who explained the derivation of the word to Archbishop Blanchet whom he met in La Paz, Bolivia, in 1851. His theory is that when the Spaniards discovered Oregon, they were struck by the natives' big ears, enlarged by heavy ornaments. They, therefore, called the Indians "Orejon." Soon the whole territory was known by that name.

Westward, ever westward, our missionaries had advanced steadily, though ever so slowly, since July 10th, until on this October 13th, it was given to them to set foot on the margin of their vineyard. Filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost, they retired apart from the place where the caravan was resting. There in a delightful level valley, at the base of a mountain, they knelt and kissed the ground. In this humble posture, they took possession of the land, and renewed "the dedication and consecration of their persons to whatever God would be pleased to require of them for the glory of His Holy Name, the propagation of His kingdom, and the fulfilment of His will."

This touching ceremony that angels must have stooped to admire took place at Boat Encampment, where the water transportation to the Pacific began. Here boats from the lower Columbia met the pack brigades from Edmonton and farther eastern posts. For thirty years the Athabasca trail between Jasper and Boat Encampment had connected the three great divisions held in the west by the Hudson's Bay Company:

Rupert's Land draining into Hudson Bay; the Indian territory—that is, all the wilderness not under Colonial control; and Vancouver Island, a crown colony administered by the Company.

Again we return to our Reverend diarist: "From Boat Encampment, the Columbia turns abruptly to the west, hence the name Big Bend is given to this curve. The rapid river rolls its swollen waters through rapids, whirlpools, falls, dalles, and abysses offering a thousand more dangers than all the rivers we had yet navigated." Alas, a little further down, at the famous "Dalles of the Dead," the river claimed twelve lives out of twenty-six who had occupied one of the boats that followed that in which the missionaries were traveling. One of the passengers, frightened at a threatened danger to the boat, tried to jump ashore, and in doing so, upset the boat. Only three bodies were recovered, and they were those of children. Poor little things, having stood the arduous journey till nearing its end, they were laid in graves at the foot of a cross near the camp, at the House of the Lakes.

Saturday, October 13th, the caravan reached Boat Encampment. Next day, Sunday the 14th, Father Demers offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, during which, we are told, the missionaries consecrated themselves to the Queen of Angels, begging her to take them under her protection.

The diary continues: "Next day—15th—the grand and famous Dalles of the Dead appear. It seems only twenty yards wide. What makes it so dangerous is the curved form, or elbow of high perpendicular rocks against which the whole body of water rushes. Hence the fury of the waves, and the necessity of pressing close to the opposite shore. Here, the boats being light with passengers and baggage are managed by eight men; six at the oars, one at the stern, and one at the prow with long wide paddles used as rudders. In this way, we passed the Dalles of the Dead without much danger. The Little Dalles below, thirty yards wide, was also fortunately run down with loaded boats without mishap."

"The Columbia is a succession of rapids," we read. "Today



*Sister M. Luke, S.S.A.*

### BOAT ENCAMPMENT

At Boat Encampment on The Big Bend of the Columbia River, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for the first time on the Mainland of British Columbia, by Reverend Modeste Demers, Sunday, October 14, 1838





we crossed nine rapids—twelve rapids—thirty-one rapids. From Spokane to Fort Okanagan, a distance of three days, we passed through innumerable rapids, at the most dangerous of which the people had to land to lighten the boats.”

There is no record of a single accident to the missionaries' boat until the brigade reached the Columbia River, but in this twelve hundred mile descent, Father Blanchet in one place says: “My barge broke open on a hidden rock, during a fog which put us in great danger. My companion was in the other barge.” And on November 14th: “At the rapids formed by Rock Islands, the passengers went ashore, but this did not prevent the boat carrying our church goods from striking a rock and breaking coming down a cascade.

“In this river, which from Boat Encampment is like a canal embanked by mountains, the days are very short. The horizon always appears on a level with the top of the trees of the following rapids. The high, rocky walls, now crowned with forests and again with beautiful rows of willows, terminate at every rapid with a drop or kind of step, making a real amphitheatre. It is a magnificent sight, but the dangers offered by the canal keep us from enjoying it. This day we traveled one hundred and twenty miles in six hours.”

Five days before the journey's end, provisions became short. The diarist says, “Two horses were purchased for food, for which the Indians were paid ten dollars apiece.” What a matter-of-fact entry,—just as if eating horseflesh was a matter-of-fact occurrence.

But the missionaries had their compensations. As soon as they had arrived at Boat Encampment, representatives of Indian tribes who dwelt between the mountains and the coast, came forward to welcome “these men of God, who came without wives, to preach, who said Mass, and wore a crucifix.” The Lake Indians were the first to meet the priests on their setting foot in their assigned vineyard. The traders had often told the natives of the Black-robcs, their chiefs. So when Father Blanchet and Father Demers appeared they were received with great joy.

Like the people on Pentecost who, as soon as they had heard Saint Peter's first sermon, hastened to present themselves for Baptism, these Indians after the first instructions on God, the Creation, the fall of Adam, and the necessity of Baptism, brought their children to the missionaries to be baptized. They regretted that they themselves could not have the happiness of having "their hearts made good," time for necessary instruction being lacking. Their one desire was to know God, and the religion that leads to Him.

When the priests left Lake House, after having been there seventeen days, the poor Indians saw them depart with sorrow, and, says Father Demers, "on our part we were not indifferent to their expression of affection." The same good will was shown them at Colville, Okanagan and Walla Walla, and augured well for the success of their work.

We have been told of the rapids, the cascades, the dalles; now we are to hear of the falls—the River of the Falls—from Father Demers in the report of his first trip back up the Columbia to Colville in 1839.

"These falls are a series of rocks, a mile or two long, which extend across the Columbia, and leave but a small channel on the left shore. These rise ever so little in an amphitheatre, and are divided by a great number of channels which the mass of water has in the course of time cut for a passage.

"The first fall is pretty regular, and from twenty to thirty feet wide. I went as far as possible to examine the channels more closely. Their number and variety are surprising. Some are dry whereas in others a large volume of water passes. The falls are from three to twelve and fifteen feet high. One may be surprised to learn that these falls are so terrible at low tide, and yet are smooth and still at very high water,—which does not happen every year." Dear Father Demers, with his sense of the human, adds: "The voyageurs instead of fearing them, at such a time, hasten to approach them to light their pipes and rest."

The diary keeps for us its day-by-day description and record with increasing interest in its sameness, its variety, its contrasts. The journey begun in the heat of July, nears its close in

the cold of November. "From Colville to the Grand Dalles the cold was so severe, some days, as to form ice on the oars of the canoes. Some nights the ground was covered with three or four inches of snow which had to be removed to pitch the tents. Nights like this under a tent, near a fire, scanty on account of the scarcity of driftwood, were far from comfortable."

Fort Vancouver keeps beckoning the brigade. Yes, in a moment it will be there. From early morning, this November 24th, oars and sail have been hastening it on. Now it stops to allow the travelers to go ashore and prepare themselves.

See, they come! They draw near the landing place! The voyageurs drop their oars; the occupants of the barges step out. They are at Fort Vancouver. The whole population is there on the bank to greet them, to bid them welcome. Oh, the heartiness of that welcome! The jubilant *Deo Gratias* of that landing!

The French Canadians with their Indian wives and half-breed children, who have so long desired the coming of the Black-robe, are there. With curious, longing eyes they distinguish the two men robed in cassocks. "Thanks be to God, the priests are here at last!"

To the chief factor, James Douglas, acting governor of the Hudson's Bay Fort and of the western territory, was due the honor of extending the first welcome. He did so with innate dignity and conducted the missionaries to apartments prepared for them within the fort enclosure. He appointed a servant to attend to their comfort, and in every way he showed his hospitality and pleasure at their company.

The Canadians from the Willamette Valley having heard that the missionaries were coming had left their homes in a body to come and greet them, but because of the delay in the arrival of the Brigade, owing to the disaster at the Dalles of the Dead, all had returned home except Joseph Gervais, Stephen Lucien and Peter Beleque. These three had been chosen to remain as representatives to welcome the priests coming in answer to their eager request.

Left to themselves, at length the missionaries looked around

in admiration. Contrasted with what they had seen of other Hudson's Bay Forts along the continent, they marveled at the prosperity, the seeming importance, the beautiful location, of this one built on a green terrace sloping to the Columbia. The Columbia River at this point was wide enough to accommodate the company's vessels. The woods flanking the fort, the mountains backing it, snow-peaked Mount Hood and Mount Helen standing guard over the seven hundred residents living among the cultivated fields of the nearby village—all this was suggestive of peace and activity. Even the guns of the fort were dismounted. Yes, their lives were indeed cast in goodly places!

The fort in which they were received with the proverbial hospitality of the Company's officials, was about 750 feet long by 450 feet wide. It was enclosed by a wooden palisade 25 feet high and securely buttressed inside. The governor's house stood in the center. Offices, buildings, houses, gardens, a chapel and a school filled the enclosure. Nearby was a 1,500-acre farm from which produce was exported on the Company's ships to Russian Alaska and to the Sandwich Islands.

If, as you and I were journeying over those 5,325 miles across Canada, and were realizing more and more as we came along the importance of the fur trade, we thought that Fort Vancouver on that narrow strip between the Rockies and the ocean had little to offer, let us now be disillusioned.

The biographer of Sir James Douglas will give us a correct impression: "Fort Vancouver, ninety miles inland from the sea, like a medieval castle was at once a refuge in time of danger, an oasis of civilization in a surrounding desert of barbarism, and a capital from which its commander ruled the adjacent territory. For more than twenty years his rule was that of a czar over the territory that stretched from Alaska to California, and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

"Over every water-way of that immense region he sent his Canadian voyageurs; through hundreds of miles of forests he despatched his trappers and traders; in and out of the fringing islands north-west to Sitka itself his schooners plied; throughout the San Joaquin and Tularo Valleys, over the Shoshone



country, on the shores of Salt Lake, and in the Yellowstone itself his brigades pitched their tents; all alike bringing home rich tribute to the Company."

But this is not all. The fort built in 1823-25 had the three-fold advantage of a central location, a surrounding country adapted to cultivation and accessibility of seagoing ships. Accordingly, it was the emporium, until 1849, not only of the Company's great interior trade but of the traffic by sea to England and the Orient.

Would you like to know the names of the many Indian tribes who "obeyed every behest and feared the displeasure of the Governor at the Fort?" They were the Cayuses, Walla-Wallas, Nez-Percés, Okanagans, Flatheads, Spokanes, Klickitats, Wascopams, Molalbas, Chinooks, Tillamooks, Clatsops, and Calapocias. These are memory names of the once lordly owners of the American continent—proud owners who, mounted on their swift Indian ponies, roamed the boundless plains for the buffalo hunt or for the warring parties.

Where are they now? A remnant is restricted to reserves. Their children are wards of the government. To make the straggling descendants of these monarchs of the New World the object of the missionaries' sympathy and solicitude was among Bishop Signay's recommendations to Fathers Blanchet and Demers.

How beautiful upon the mountain  
are the feet of them  
that bringeth good tidings  
and that preacheth peace:  
of them that showeth forth good  
that preacheth salvation.

#### SUMMARY OF THE JOURNEY—LACHINE TO FORT VANCOUVER

Left Lachine, May 3rd, 1838

Reached Fort Vancouver, November 24th..... 206 days

Lachine to Red River—2,100 miles..... 33 days

Red River, across the Rockies to Boat Encampment	
—2,025 miles .....	84 days
Boat Encampment to Fort Vancouver—1,200 miles	11 days
	<hr/>
Total—5,325 miles .....	128 days
Detentions, at regular stopping places; foul weather;	
repairs to canoes, etc. ....	78 days

---

## CHAPTER VII

---

### THE FIELDS ARE WHITE

THE beautiful summer weather of Sunday, November 25th, harmonized with the grand function of the solemn High Mass which was sung within the fort of Vancouver on the Columbia River, the day after the arrival of the missionaries. Many of those present had not assisted at a Catholic service for fifteen even twenty years. They were moved to tears.

All along the way of their six months' and three weeks' journey from east to west, the priests, in their clerical cassocks, had been prominent figures. They had been regular in saying Holy Mass and in delivering Sunday sermons whenever the stops at the forts afforded them the opportunity of so doing. Keen-eyed and observant, they had taken advantage of every opportunity to fulfil their ministry of apostolic charity and had, through the Sacrament of Baptism, enrolled one hundred seventy-five persons in the kingdom of Christ.

From now on, for the years of their earthly career, they were to have the happiness of rendering regular priestly ministry on an ever increasing scale. Like spirited athletes entering the lists, they opened a mission at Fort Vancouver after only two days' rest. The mission lasted one hundred forty days.

It was an exceedingly busy time for the missionaries, and the people responded in a manner which proved the sincerity of their appeal to have priests come to them.

No elaborate sermons marked the mission; there was too much elementary teaching necessary. First, there were prayers to learn or to relearn, and primary lessons in catechism to be given. To make these first steps attractive, as well as to teach the people to serve God by "making melody in their hearts," much singing was combined with the lessons in Christian Doctrine. The missionaries, accustomed as they had been from

boyhood to liturgical chant, taught it from the start to their catechumens. They soon had a repertoire of fifty hymns. The accomplishment of such fine results in such a short time was due to the fact that both priests were good singers themselves—Father Demers pre-eminently so—and they were a stimulus to others. Besides, singing was as natural as breathing to the Canadian freemen at the fort, the trappers and the voyageurs who lived in the vicinity; the Indians, too, were on the whole born singers.

With the teaching of the Gregorian chant for Sunday Mass and Vespers went the training of acolytes to serve the priests in the sanctuary.

Evidently the two missionaries had come to work, and work they did. The forenoon session of the mission lasted from eight o'clock to eleven thirty and was devoted to teaching the women and the children at the fort prayers and the catechism. French was the language in general use—in fact, it was obligatory in the Company from commercial rather than merely national motives. Why this should have been so is strange since that among forty Hudson's Bay Company officials thirty-eight were English or Scotch, and only two were French. You understand theirs was not Parisian French. As the native women could not read, the teaching was done by dint of repetition.

In the afternoon, from one o'clock to five, the Indian women of the village, numbering sixty, sat with their children to receive instructions for baptism and to learn their prayers. The evening was reserved for the men.

It accords with the devotion of the two priestly clients of the Blessed Virgin, of which proof was given during their long journey, that they taught the rosary to these early Christians as soon as the prayers which compose it were known. With swift, deft fingers Father Demers made fifty sets of prayer beads which he distributed among these fervent Christians, as fertile seed to bear Catholic fruit.

With as much facility for acquiring languages as dexterity in handling tools, Father Demers had in the short space of six weeks grasped enough of Chinook to translate prayers and even



to compose hymns in the dialect. Naturally he, as well as the congregation, were pleased with themselves when they sang their own hymns at the services, the men alternating with the women and children in the verses, and all joining in the chorus. The religious exercises drew the leading men of the fort. The Indian braves also came, seventy to one hundred fifty of them.

The good people of the Willamette Valley who had been foremost in their efforts to secure the ministry of priests on the coast, were now very anxious to have one of them in their midst. Accordingly, two canoes were despatched to Fort Vancouver to fetch either of them. Father Blanchet elected to go, leaving his faithful companion to continue the mission at the Fort. He started off for the Willamette with the two most respected men of the Valley who had been delegated to be his companions.

It has been handed down as a family honor to their grandchildren that the homes of the delegates, Mr. Lucier and Mr. Beleque, were the first to welcome the priest. His presence was the beginning of three weeks of supreme joy in the valley.

The mission began at once. Seldom has any been held under more earnest auspices. The men in their desire to have the women and children lose nothing of the instructions, put up tents for them around the buildings where the services were conducted. The men who lived near enough came to Mass every morning. After spending much of the day in church they went home late in the afternoon to attend to their home duties. Those who lived farthest away installed themselves in a large hall, and left to the slaves at home the doing of the farm chores and the care of the crops. (Slavery was still shamelessly carried on in these parts by mercenaries who hired out their serfs.)

The French Canadians, though they had been far from living up to Catholic principles—how could they when they had been thirty, forty years without the opportunity of going to the Sacraments—were true to their faith. They showed the power of grace in their willing acceptance of the hard condition of separation from their wives until their illicit unions had

been blessed by the Church. That this period of separation was not always the matter of the short time needed to instruct the native wives in preparation for Baptism we have evidence in the case of a certain Canadian who had been married according to the custom of the land without producing the death certificate of a previous wife in Canada. When he presented himself to have his present marriage blessed, the priest ordered a separation until the death of the first wife could be proved. This, we know, would take at least a year. The man abided by the decision.

While continued fine weather in January may not be as unusual in Oregon as in Quebec, it was exceptionally fine and mild—real May weather—during the mission, so mild, in fact, that the devout exclaimed in full appreciation of this delicate consideration of Divine Providence, giving credit to whom it was due, saying, “Le bon Dieu, the Good God, through condescension has given us this fine weather!”

In all these missions the program was the same—Holy Mass, prayers, explanation of the Creed and of the principal truths of religion, and the singing of hymns.

Among the native women who followed the mission only a few understood French; the majority spoke a variety of tongues, each totally different from the other; but willing interpreters were always at hand to transmit the words of the priest.

As learning is the handmaid of religion, Father Blanchet, though so busy with mission duties, obtained the help of a “young man from France who knew how to read.” It does seem strange to us, surrounded by so many advantages for learning, from the primer stage to degrees in philosophy, that only one hundred years ago, to find a teacher who could teach reading was a boon. In the evening while the priest heard the confessions of the men—who, we are told had to come more than once—and of the little boys and girls to accustom them to this holy practice, the young Frenchman taught some of the boys how to read and how to serve Mass.

Small wooden crosses were blessed by the priest and placed

in each house. Among the parting recommendations of Father Blanchet on leaving the responsive people of the Willamette Valley, was that the families should sing in their homes six verses of the hymns they had sung at Holy Mass during the time of the Mission.

And here we must pause to admire the solid foundation, the simple fundamentals, on which the Church grew, bearing fruit a hundredfold, in this western territory. A minimum of success gratified the missionaries. They, for instance, record, "Many of the Indian women, and a number of grown up boys and girls, and little children, have learned to make the Sign of the Cross, the morning offering, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed and some of the Acts. Twenty-five Indian women, in excellent disposition, have been baptized and their wedlock blessed by the Church. Forty-seven children have also been baptized."

In the first part of this book we quoted of St. Paul, "In journeyings often." Of Fathers Blanchet and Demers we might say they journeyed uninterruptedly. To produce more fruit in their ministry, the two evangelizers divided the field of their operations. Father Blanchet took the territory south of the Columbia, and Father Demers was given the country to the north, that is, the present state of Washington, New Caledonia, or the British Columbia of today, and Alaska.

It would have been very congenial to both missionaries to work side by side, their long journey across Canada had endeared them to each other; but now they had to be separated for months at a time without means of communication. This was part of the price required by the service on which they had entered.

While Father Blanchet was multiplying himself, in missionary labor, to a superhuman degree almost, Father Demers, as zealous and energetic, was continuing the mission at Fort Vancouver. In response to a message from his superior officer, he interrupted his work, and early in the spring embarked in a canoe with an Indian who had been sent for him, and proceeded to Nisqually. Passing through Cowlitz he met Father

Blanchet and the two priests had the happiness of a few hours together, and the good people the pleasure of receiving them.

Father Demers arrived at Nisqually drenched and cold from the continuous rain of the six-day trip from Fort Vancouver. He was most cordially welcomed by Mr. Kitson, commander of the fort, and a house was given him for chapel services. Next day he began the mission by saying Holy Mass, at which the commander and other people of the fort assisted.

And, think of it, twenty-two Indian tribes followed the mission exercises. Alas, how few of their descendants could be mustered today either for a religious or for a civic function!

In this, his first great mission to the Indians, exactly four months after setting foot on the Pacific Coast, Father Demers gave evidence that he was a born peacemaker. It was the law in all the forts of the fur land that only a few Indians at a time were to be admitted within the gates. The wisdom of this precautionary measure against Indians who sometimes became infuriated with rage by drink was widely known. A violator of this law was sure to be the loser for the men within the fort were fearless.

So in this case, though for the good purpose of attending the mission, it was out of the question to allow so great a crowd of Indians inside the palisade. The commander told them so. But the example of disobedience given by our first parents in the garden of Eden has been followed by ancients and by moderns all along the march of time. To dare the law comes quite as naturally to the low born, as to the high born. One of the Indians rashly tried to force an entry into the fort. He was roughly pushed away. In no time there was uproar, confusion, almost a riot. The man of God appeared. He raised his hand with a quieting gesture. The effect was instantaneous. The untamed multitude dropped into peaceful quiet.

The narrator makes the following reflection: "Who can fail to see the salutary influence of religion over the heart of man, in thus allaying passions that know no other master than passion. Admirable, indeed, it is in the undisciplined soul of these



savages, who, having not as yet the least idea of Christianity, nevertheless, fall under its irresistible action."

Quiet and order having been restored by the mere appearance of the priest, the Indians behaved during the remainder of the mission so as to be a consolation to him. They listened so attentively and so profitably that when he was leaving them, they flocked around him, entreating that he remain longer. And here comes the test of their genuine sorrow for past offences. "If," said they, "polygamy is such an evil in the eyes of the Great Spirit, we will conform to His will."

Father Demers looked upon the crowd. It was unkempt, uncouth, swarthy featured. The simple priest was one of nature's gentlemen; son of a simple Canadian farmer he was yet destined to associate with the highest in the land and to be honored by them. Why? Because to true nobility of character he joined a heart modelled on that of the Good Shepherd. So, as his eyes roamed over the heads of these denizens of forest and plain, his whole being went out to them with a great love, a love that was to be as constant as death.

Yes, Father Demers was in his element with the Indians. His missionary zeal in their cause never slackened. When as Bishop of Victoria he would be gone three and more months without there being any means of hearing from him, and when the worry of those at headquarters would increase with his prolonged absence, he would return from the Indian camps quite rejuvenated. "It is my life," he would say to his relieved flock. When out on these visitations to his beloved Indians he would say Holy Mass, instruct, confess, and teach singing. The busy day over, he would pray far into the night. This we have from a tousled old Indian who often told the story, "Mees Demers," he was wont to recall, "had a big cross in the camp; when we were all in bed, he would kneel before it with arms outstretched for a very long time."

Every spring the Hudson's Bay Brigade from the north and another from the California frontier in the south, met at Fort Vancouver with cargoes of furs and merchandise. The men who composed these brigades were called respectively, "Northern

and southern porteurs" (packers) because for want of horses they had to carry loads on their backs.

It was decided that Father Demers would go to Colville with the northern packers when they started off again after a three weeks' sojourn at the fort. The long missionary trip was made possible by the offer of a free passage with the brigade. Accordingly, Father Demers left on June 22, 1839, going up the Columbia with a flotilla of nine barges manned by fifty-seven men under the command of chief factors Ogden and Black. At Walla Walla, on the south-east boundary of what is now the state of Washington, Father Demers parted from the brigade and went northward across the territory of Colville, near the border of what is now British Columbia. Colville was an important Hudson's Bay post, being a depot for the surrounding country, and the final place of call for the brigades eastward bound by Edmonton to Norway House.

The natives in the vicinity of Colville had given the missionaries the heartiest of welcomes seven months previously when they first entered Oregon westward bound. At that time these friendly Indians had been notified by a barge that had come ahead of the brigade, of the near approach of the long-looked for "chief of the white men." Five nations from different directions had set out to come and meet them. As soon as they had distinguished the black gowns, they had hastened to the shore and had greeted them with every demonstration of joy.

The missionaries had been delighted with this proof of cordial welcome extended to them at the very gate of their field of labor. So great had been the crowd that obstructed the way to the fort where the missionaries wanted first to go and pay their respects to the commander, that it was with difficulty they got through. But the duty of civility accomplished, the two priests lost no time in returning to the expectant assembly waiting in silence in a large hall for their reappearance.

The messengers of the Gospel began to speak. The Indians listened with an intentness that seemed inspired. The words of the missionaries were interpreted to the people by the chiefs with a warmth and force that gave them weight. Such eager-

ness for the divine truths was most encouraging. It filled the priests with the sweet hope that God in His goodness would fructify their teaching. On leaving the friendly Indians to continue their journey with the brigade, the missionaries had said that one of them would come back as soon as could be arranged. It was in fulfillment of this promise that Father Demers had now come.

But he had not reached them without considerable trouble, even danger of death. When he left the brigade at Walla Walla, Mr. Pambrun, the commander of the fort with the invariable courtesy and generosity extended to missionaries by Hudson's Bay officials, appointed one of his men and a guide to accompany the traveler to the end of his journey. He also provided four horses, one a pack horse, for the six-day trip through uninhabited territory. Supplies of food and camping outfits had also to be taken along. The party had been on the march only three days and had covered but half of the distance when the Indian guide refused to go on. Entreaty, persuasion fell on a stony heart. He turned back leaving the two men stranded in the unknown damp prairie, and thick woods. They walked, they stumbled, till at night they found themselves nine miles from their last night's camp. The only thing to do was for one of them to go back to Walla Walla. Father Demers' companion did so. Father Demers was left alone in that great solitude. He had but a knife and a hatchet to defend himself from the attacks of wild beasts. He spent eight days of dreadful agony alone. Oh, the joy of hailing the return of his companion with a reliable guide!

About this experience Father Demers wrote: "In all the anxiety through which I passed, I did not believe that it was God's will I should perish in that desert. But I resigned myself willingly to His good pleasure if by the sacrifice of my poor life God would be the more glorified by the salvation of souls. I admit that the solitude was terrible. Why was not I a Francis Xavier to bear as a saint this suffering which God, no doubt, sent me in His mercy, to place before my eyes my weakness

and incapacity? I made my sacrifice with all my heart, and felt better."

Instead of reaching Colville in six days Father Demers reached it in twenty-five. The Indians received him with open arms. Besides the trouble of readjusting improper marriages which existed everywhere, the missionary also had here to oppose false teachings. One of the objections his enemies spread in Colville was that "Ceremonies do not save souls." They were trying to show that the Catholic religion consisted only in the practice of externals. "A diabolical objection," answered Father Demers, "for the ceremonies of the Church always make a good impression on those who witness them often, and on Indians who seldom have this opportunity, and they prepare their souls for grace."

The mission at Colville lasted thirty-three days and proved beneficial to the men in the fort as well as to the Indians in the vicinity. From there Father Demers passed on to Okanagan.

There was plenty of variety in the sufferings endured by the missionary in his travels. In this other six-day journey, it was first treachery, then solitude, excessive heat and thirst that tried him in body and in spirit. To such extremity of thirst was the party reduced that they drank stagnant water. Prairie fires had recently swept over the country and scorched everything, so that a patch of green for the horses was rare.

In Okanagan the suffering was to be of a very different kind. The consolation afforded Father Demers by a Christian who already had taught the Indians to pray, was counter-balanced by the trouble caused by a miserable Catholic who sullied the character of the priest. By the help of God the cloud was soon dispelled and the vile calumny had no effect on the Indians who held the man of God in highest esteem. He, in his humility, said, "God prepared this trial for me to remind me that the servant is not above the Master."

Having had to bear treachery, solitude, heat, thirst and vilification, the missionary returned to Vancouver October 1, after an absence of three months and ten days. He had poured



the regenerating waters of baptism on eighteen whites and fifty-five Indians, and thus he fulfilled Christ's command:

Going therefore,  
teach ye all nations  
baptising them,  
In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son  
and of the Holy Ghost.

---

## CHAPTER VIII

---

### CROSS ISLAND

WHEN Father Demers left for Walla Walla with the brigade of the north, the apostolic occupations of Father Blanchet were increased by the brigade from California which, note it well, came laden with furs. History tells us that fur-bearing animals once held sway in the sunny south, but with the aborigines who once shared the Golden State with them, they have been almost annihilated by the pressure of civilization. Remnants of both are confined in paltry reserves.

Such has been the fate of the fur supply that for two centuries was the standard of Canada's wealth; such the all but extermination in its source, of a staple that was the paramount asset in the foundation of cities on plains and in forests, and the link between Montreal in the east, Winnipeg in the center and Vancouver and Victoria in the west.

Fur made fortunes. Impetus was first given to the trade in 1660 when Pierre Esprit Radisson of Three Rivers brought thousands of dollars' worth of furs from the northland to Montreal. Two hundred years later, that is in 1865, furs were still a vital source of income, for that year the Hudson's Bay Company exported four hundred thirty-seven thousand skins. Of these, sixty-eight thousand, three hundred seventy-four were beaver, the most valuable in the market; seventeen thousand five hundred were buffalo; the rest, black, grizzly, brown and white bear.

Can one wonder at the lure of such profits in the trade? The North-West Company, more skilled in trapping than even its rival, the great Hudson's Bay Company, sent a still greater quantity of pelts to Montreal. Besides the furs already mentioned there entered into the traffic the silver fox, the red fox, the white fox, the cross and the blue foxes; also the ermine,

the mink and the much prized carcajou. Other exports of the trade were whalefin, feathers, deerhorn and goose quills in very large quantities. Before the introduction of steel pens in 1825, these last were used for writing. Conceive, if you can, the enormous number of animals trapped in a year, and the equally enormous profits. The Hudson's Bay Company in the space of fifty years, 1670-1710, twice trebled its stock.

But if it is true, and we know it is, that there is nothing lasting under the sun, sudden fortunes may be classed among the least lasting. The fortunes built on furs, like those of Klondike gold some hundred years later, were ephemeral. It was a common saying that "wealth made in the Indian country did not flourish on other soil." With few exceptions, the explorers and fur traders who made the largest sums died in debt and poverty. Even Sir George Simpson, who of all men had the greatest opportunities for amassing wealth, wrote in 1832, "I am sick and tired and anxious to get away from this country, but my means do not allow me to shake off the harness."

Father Blanchet tells us that besides the fur cargoes from California, rich trappings brought in by big walrus-skin canoes from Alaska were also unloaded at Fort Vancouver.

The brigades from the south encountered many dangers on the way from attacks by ambushed Indians. A very warlike tribe ever on the lookout for murder and plunder occupied southern Oregon. So cunning were they that the Hudson's Bay men, though wary of them, called their district, "The Rogue River" District.

The news that the "men of God" had come was heralded far and wide, for though distances were great in those days when automobiles and airplanes were unknown, news traveled quickly. The Indians heard that one of the black gowns was at Cowlitz. Prompted by curiosity, or more correctly by the grace of God, delegations came to see, to hear and to carry away the light of faith.

Among them came a tribe from Whidby Island, led by their Chief Tslalakum. They had traveled two days by canoe, and

marched three days over so rough a trail that they arrived with bleeding feet, famished and completely exhausted.

While they were recovering from the exertion of their hard trip, Father Blanchet thought over the problem of giving them some idea of religion. Assembled before him, expecting revelations of the supernatural, were tribes speaking languages as different as those of the "Parthians, Medes, Elamites and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia," and other nations, who had been drawn around the Apostles by "a mighty wind and heard them speak in their own tongue of the wonderful works of God." But he, a poor Canadian nineteenth century missionary—had not the gift of tongues.

Inspiration came to his aid. He got his cue from a ruler. He went out and cut a stick on which he made forty horizontal bars meant to represent the forty centuries before the coming of Christ. Above these he made thirty-three heavy dots, surmounted by a cross, to show our Blessed Redeemer's years on earth; then eighteen other bars and thirty-nine dots (1839) to mark the eighteen centuries and thirty-nine years after the coming of Christ.

The plan proved a great success. This device enabled the missionary to show the beginning of the world, the creation, the promise of a Redeemer, His birth and His death. It can be explained only by the special light of the Holy Ghost, bestowed on those early Christians of the Church in the west, that in eight days, these primitive children of the woods could have mastered the story of Creation and Redemption through this simple exposition. Moreover, they had learned the Sign of the Cross and two hymns in Chinook. They started for home more than pleased and provided with a stick from above (a Sahala stick). In time this stick, known as the Catholic Ladder, was amplified and reproduced on a chart. It has proved a unique, invaluable symbol to communicate the truths of religion by signs.

That so much was accomplished in a week reflects the greatest credit on the attention, assiduity and receptive power of those instructed. But how appraise the ingenuity, the tact, the



self-surrender, of the missionary instructor? Better leave this to God. However, what wonders of grace may we not expect from humility, obedience and love of the Blessed Virgin, as exemplified in these two priests of God.

In May of 1840 Father Blanchet went on a second mission to Nisqually to consolidate the good begun there by Father Demers some four months before. In passing, it may be repeated that wherever the missionaries went they were honored guests at the forts. The fort at Nisqually contained five families including that of Mr. Kitson, the commander, and those of his men, numbering in all thirty-six souls. The men attended Holy Mass at five o'clock and the other exercises in the evening. The commander, though not a Catholic, set the example. He also was pleased to act as interpreter in a couple of dialects. Here, as elsewhere, the missionary taught the women and the children in the fort during the forenoon, and the Indians in the afternoon. At first, there were only a few present, but every day more came by canoe till at the end of twelve days the congregation numbered three hundred. Incidentally, much time was given to handshaking, every man, woman and child claiming this satisfaction.

Instructions were given in the open under the shade of a tree. Attention was riveted on the Catholic Ladder which was hung on a long pole. Among the remarks made upon the repopulation of the race after the flood, was this by our old friend, the chief from Whidby Island, "That man Noah, had more children than the first man, Adam."

The happy missionary says, "It was a splendid sight to look from the inside gallery of the fort at night on the Indian camp with its numerous bright fires, and to listen to the harangues of the chiefs on the subjects explained to them, and to their exhortations one to another to heed the great chief sent by God."

"On the last Sunday of the mission, Mass was celebrated outside the fort. "The men sat on mats in a semicircle in front of the improvised altar, and the women sat behind them. At Mass and Vespers, the separate choirs of men and women made the

air resound with the chant of hymns which they sang in perfect harmony."

On October 1st Father Demers arrived in Fort Vancouver from Colville, and met his dear colleague in the sacred ministry. United as were these two servants of Mother Church by nationality, sacerdotal fraternity and missionary calling, they were also one in their methods of dealing with their neophytes. Their joy on meeting was always great, but it was necessarily of short duration. On this occasion they parted after nine days, each going to make a permanent establishment, one in the Willamette Valley, the other in Cowlitz. Writing about this, Father Demers says, "This separation did not take place without sorrow, as we were leaving each other not to meet for four months."

All through Father Blanchet's diary there is an undercurrent of praise for the work done by his dear confrère. In one place we read, "Tender and touching was our embrace after our long separation of nearly nine months and a half." Truly were their souls knit in holy friendship.

Although Father Blanchet was the vicar-general, he did nothing without consulting Father Demers. He tells us of going to Cowlitz "to deliberate with him on the plan of the summer campaign." He adds, "we embraced each other." The consolation of their meeting was cut short by a sick call from Mr. Kitson at Fort Nisqually. Father Blanchet set out at once to visit the sick commander, and to give another mission at Fort Nisqually.

This third mission to Nisqually was full of inexpressible happiness for Father Blanchet. First, he prepared Mr. Kitson to be received into the Church, baptized him and gave him the Last Rites. Next, the Indians were all eagerness in answering the bell that announced the explanation of the Catholic Ladder. Above all was the joy of an invitation from Tslalakum, the Whidby Island chief. Too sick to come himself, the good chief sent his wife and six men to fetch the priest. In proof of his sincerity he gave his wife his stick from above encased in a skin sheath, to show to the missionary.

How the Indian women were garbed before this is not stated, but the missionary thinks worthy of mention that "Mrs. Kitson had taught them how to make dresses of deerskin, they now came dressed like women." Mrs. Kitson had received the gift of faith and been baptized by Father Demers during his first mission the preceding year. She was ever a tireless interpreter for the missionaries.

Thanking God for the opportunity afforded him by the invitation of Chief Tslalakum of going to Whidby Island, Father Blanchet started immediately. He was received with every possible civility by the whole tribe, and by the sick chief who was improving. His baggage was carried to the village for him. The next day, an altar was prepared in a repository made of mats; a rough board answered the purpose of an altar table. The vestments and the sacred vessels for Holy Mass were exposed to the admiration of the people. Next, the Catholic Ladder, seven feet long, was fixed to a mat and raised high so as to be seen by all.

Vested in surplice and stole the priest began the Sign of the Cross. To his astonishment every man, woman and child made the sign perfectly accompanying it with the words distinctly and correctly pronounced. He intoned a hymn. It was taken up and sung through with utmost precision. He began another. The same gratifying result followed.

Father Blanchet shed tears of gratitude. He says, "I blessed the Lord for the good dispositions of Tslalakum who had such success in teaching his people."

In the course of the missionary's instruction two other chiefs with their bands arrived. After the general handshaking, the chiefs took their semicircular places in front of the altar. As the priest robed for Holy Mass he explained each article used at Mass and the chief parts of the Holy Sacrifice, that great "Prayer of Catholics." The whole congregation made the Sign of the Cross and sang hymns. This convinced the priest that both the newly arrived chiefs had done with their tribes what Tslalakum had done with his, and that the lessons with the

Catholic Ladder and the hymns taught a year ago had borne excellent results.

"In admiration of what I saw and heard," writes Father Blanchet, "I thought I was in heaven rather than in an Indian country. Again, tears of joy filled my eyes. Infinite Satisfaction had been offered to God for the sins of those poor souls. There was hope. Other bands of Indians arrived after Holy Mass, I continued instructions until night and ended the day by prayer, the rosary and hymns. Next day, a large number of Indians from different parts of the island came to swell the gathering. All were as attentive and recollected at Holy Mass as were those of the day before."

After Mass, Father Blanchet, who was desirous of visiting the whole island, directed his steps northward to the village of Chief Netlam. He passed through prairies that were in all their May bloom, and through forests of trees far surpassing in height any in his native land. Then he came to potato fields that had been cultivated with no other implement than a curved stick. In contrast to these peaceful areas there were palisades, eighteen and twenty feet high, put up by the Indians as defences against their foes from the Fraser River.

Chief Netlam received Father Blanchet with every mark of Indian distinction, leading him to a seat of honor on a pile of folded mats on the floor. The house was of logs, thirty by twenty feet, and tapestried with mats. There was an opening in the roof to let out the smoke. In spite of the smoke a Catholic must have breathed more freely in this lodge than in any other, for there was no polygamy here, as was generally the case with chiefs.

After prayers and hymns Father Blanchet went to the shore where there were fifteen lodges whose dwellers had never seen a Blackgown. More than one hundred and fifty Indians came forward for the etiquette of touching the priest's hand. Then they, too, made the Sign of the Cross and sang hymns that had been taught them by some of their more fortunate fellow natives who had been at a mission. This spreading of religious teaching by the few who had received it at the forts, and had



propagated it to many on the island, again overwhelmed the missionary with happiness.

On his return from the rounds of the lodges on the shore, he found a large delegation of Indians awaiting him at his tent. As if his rest consisted in instructing others in the way of salvation, the energetic missionary poured out his zeal on the newcomers until far into the night. Next day not even the howling wind and raging waves prevented the four Island chiefs from coming to Sunday Mass. In all, the Indians were some four hundred strong.

Describing this scene Father Blanchet says, "My emotion at the sight of such a multitude eager to hear about the kingdom of heaven was so great I could not control it. So many voices blended in pure, natural and expressive singing, with a certain melancholy touch, seemed to me to surpass the best compositions of the great masters. I was quite overcome."

Mass over, everybody sat down to enjoy a meal of salmon and smoked venison ordered by the missionary, and served on mats—laid on the ground, of course. One of the chiefs who sat at the festive board was conspicuous in full French dress—trousers, shirt, vest, cravat, hat and overcoat—everything except footwear. This Parisian style was improved, or perhaps marred, by a profusion of ornamental quills. The chief's real name was Witskalatche but he was quite appropriately named "Le Francais."

In the midst of the solemn feast a gleeful shout was heard. It came from Indians who were carrying a twenty-four foot cross to a spot prepared for it. Later, when the cross had been erected and solemnly blessed, the whole assembly, following the example of the priest, came up and prostrated themselves to venerate it. Then the whole multitude rendered homage to God and Jesus Christ in an outburst of singing.

There is an historical sequel to this ceremony. In 1841, Commodore Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition paid a visit to Father Blanchet at Nisqually. In the course of dinner with his host he said, "In passing by Whidby Island I

saw a large cross erected there; it at once suggested my naming it Cross Island, which I did."

Tourists of today seeing the island so named on their guide map, should bow acknowledgment to Tslalakum, the first chief of Whidby Island to embrace Christianity, and the first to raise the emblem of Redemption on its shores.

The busy Sunday of May 31st was only half over. The moving spectacle of baptizing one hundred twenty-two children was yet to be witnessed. Preparatory to administering the Sacrament the priest explained the fall of Adam, the mystery of Redemption and the medicine of Baptism. He then required a profession of faith and an abjuration of errors by all.

"Do you believe in God who created all things?"

All answered loudly, "Yes, we believe in God who created all things."

"Do you believe in Jesus Christ who came to redeem us!"

"Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ who came to redeem us."

"Do you believe He has made seven medicines to make us good?"

"Yes, we believe He has made seven medicines to make us good."

In the same earnest manner they answered the other questions by repeating them affirmatively.

"Do you believe He has made but one road to heaven?"

"Do you promise to keep and to follow the road of the Blackgown, which is the one made by Jesus Christ?"

"Do you reject all the roads lately made by men?"

"Do you renounce the devil, his thoughts, words and deeds?"

"Do you desire to know, love and serve the Great Master of all things?"

"Yes, we desire to know, love and serve the Great Master of all things."

It must have been impressive to hear these protestations from four hundred mouths. The ceremony of solemn Baptism then began. It lasted four hours. The missionary records that

"the heat was oppressive. The children were scared, they kept up much crying."

A part that cannot fail to surprise the readers of Father Blanchet's Sketches, from which the above is taken, is that he does not mention his fatigue, nor any of the discomforts of the Indian situations in which he moves.

During this visitation to Whidby Island the missionary, ever a messenger of peace, effected a reconciliation between warring parties that only a few days before had attacked Tslalakum. They had been repulsed for, as the good chief said, "Those men do not know God, nor do they pray to Him." He attributed his own success to the cross he wore.

It was not enough now that the calumet had been passed around at the Sunday dinner of four hundred. The conditions of the peace had to be laid down. The speeches took place where the fighting had originated. They lasted four hours. Indians have time on their hands, but what an ordeal for a vivacious French Canadian! However, it was not without some interest to Father Blanchet, for he remarks, "My address was transmitted by my interpreter to a third who delivered it to the chiefs with astonishing eloquence."

The indemnification was the giving of two guns for the two lives taken. This much settled, our friend Le Francais was commissioned to bring the guns to the Klalams who had been attacked. These in return, according to custom, made practical acknowledgment. This concluded the peace.

Upon leaving the island that promised so much for Christianity, Father Blanchet made a present of his big Catholic Ladder to chief Netlam. In recognition the chief offered to take the priest back to Nisqually in his large wooden canoe.

Noblesse oblige!

---

## CHAPTER IX

---

### IROQUOIS HARBINGERS OF MISSIONARIES

HOW may one account for the fact that the Indians of the far west responded with such eagerness to the teaching of the missionaries? Not only that they responded with eagerness, but that on hearing of the black robes' approach they hastened long canoe-distances to greet them, and to put, as it were, their eternal destiny into their keeping. To make such sincere advances towards welcoming religion is rare in the annals of missionology. Rather does history abound with stories of holy, apostolic men praying, suffering, enduring for years without making a single convert.

A most recent example of missionary perseverance and zeal is the experience of Bishop Turquetil, O.M.I. The details were made known a year ago, 1937, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bishop's arrival among the Eskimo at Chesterfield Inlet, farthest corner of Hudson Bay, on the rim of the Arctic. When the Bishop first arrived among the natives of this region, he and his companions were received with repelling coldness. They, however, had come to stay. They lived the life, bore the hardships, spoke the language of the people. The only response to their every advance was indifference, mockery, even diabolical hostility. Five years passed without the least change. It was as if the Eskimo had taken the stand "to freeze" the missionaries away.

About this time the "Little Flower" was coming into evidence as patroness of the missions. Father Turquetil put his apostolate under her patronage. Soon there followed the baptism of a child in danger of death. It was the beginning. The Catholic religion quickly developed in ten Christian Eskimo settlements.



The acceptance of Christian doctrine by some, or the indifference and contempt shown to it by others, may be explained—always recognizing God as the supreme Ruler—on the theory that some people are more amenable than others to teaching and example. In British Columbia, where one tribe accepted the teaching of the missionaries most readily and were faithful, a neighboring tribe remained persistently hardened.

The western Indians were savages. They had all the traits of the race, but, on the whole, in a lesser degree than the tribes on the other side of the Rockies. Who can say if this semi-tempered condition was, or was not, due to climate?

The way for the great work of evangelization on the Pacific Coast was remotely prepared, as it had been in the middle fur land, by French Canadians in the employ of the Hudson's Bay and the North-West Fur companies. Many of the men hired to trap in the hunting fields and to row the great transport boats, having fulfilled their contracts, preferred the freedom of the vast, open country to the restraint of agricultural life in civilization. They mated with native women and gave rise to the class of half-breeds by which general name their offspring were known. As it is the tendency of human nature to sink rather than to rise, these French Canadians, instead of lifting their families to the level of their noble ancestry, stooped to aboriginal life. But be it conceded to them that though at times their actions were far from conforming to the Catholic code, they at least preserved the Faith. Often they spoke of their Church, its ceremonies and of the priests of their home parishes in Lower Canada. They said, "Some day the priest will come and teach you how to serve God."

All these things began to happen as far back as Champlain's time. They continued till 1818, when the foundation of the church was laid in mid-Canada. Strange to say, the Iroquois, of all people, had a share in the glory of procuring missionaries for the tribes bordering on the Rockies. It happened this way.

In 1811 Captain Hunt started on a new route across the continent from Lachine with an expedition of Canadians and

twenty-four Iroquois. He was on his way to Fort Vancouver. The hardships proved too great and the Canadians either died on the way or deserted. The Iroquois found themselves stranded in the neighborhood of the Flatheads in Montana. Eventually they married and became incorporated with the tribe. Coming from Eastern Canada, they were well instructed Catholics and practised their religion as well as they could in their new environment. They taught religion to their wives and children, and often spoke about it to their new kindred, the Flatheads. These being naturally good, took to it most kindly.

So much indeed did the Montana Indians desire to have a priest among them that for this purpose they sent four separate deputations to the Jesuits in St. Louis, Missouri. The first delegates, four in number, went on this mission in 1831. They had just arrived at St. Louis and stated the object of their coming when two of them fell sick and died. They had the reward of their enterprise in receiving Baptism. The other two were lost on the way home.

Four years later Old Ignatius with two companions reached St. Louis on the same errand and returned safely but without achieving any result. In 1837, five Indians headed by Old Ignatius again endeavored to make the trip but were killed by the Sioux. This was indeed disheartening, but the Iroquois-Flatheads sent a fourth party in 1839 to renew their request. This time all went well. In the spring of the year 1840, they were rejoiced by the coming of the great missionary, Father de Smet.

Whether God is served in this place, or in that, does not matter so long as He is served; but it was the exceptionally good dispositions of the Montana Indians that deprived Father Blanchet and Demers of the help of the Jesuits.

Father de Smet writing to the two overworked priests, August, 1840, explains: "The object of my mission had been to visit Oregon and to report on the favorable places to open missions, but the Indians here have so great a predilection for

Catholic priests that we will have enough to do among them in these mountains without going farther."

Missionary that he was, looming large as he did in mission annals, he ends his letter in humble distrust of his own ability. "I hope to have the aid of your counsels, and to work in concert with you to gain these poor natives to Jesus Christ."

All honor to the twenty-four Iroquois who were instrumental in bringing the Jesuits to found the Rocky mountain missions! Eternal praise to God for choosing most out-of-the-way instruments to fulfill his loving designs!

The record of the ceaseless activity of the two lone Oregon missionaries in criss-crossing the extensive territory of their apostolic ministrations holds us spellbound. How they could have borne for months and years the tediousness of canoe travel and the strenuous days of ministry is above comprehension. But if they could do but little by themselves, they could do all things by the help of Him who strengthened them.

Here is an example, taken at random, of the travels and labors of Father Demers during five and a half months. May 19, 1840, Father Demers left Cowlitz to give a mission to a Chinook tribe at Astoria. But first a word about these Indians. They were once a mighty people scattered along the Columbia River from Fort Vancouver to the Pacific Ocean. Before 1830 they were still most numerous, rich, proud and haughty. At about this time, they were visited by a plague of fever which decimated them at each annual recurrence. It may be that the death rate was swollen by the rashness of many victims, who, with high temperatures plunged into the rivers, and consequently found death from exposure instead of relief.

The Chinook language was almost unlearnable. This may account for the popular jargon called Chinook, which consists of some five hundred words taken here and there from the original language mixed with French and so mispronounced as to cover all trace of their origin. Easily acquired, this dialect is generally used by whites who come in contact with the Indians. In a short six weeks, as has been noted, Father Demers knew it well enough to give instructions in it, and to teach

catechism offhand. He had even advanced to the stage of setting his translation of the Creed to a certain air with the purpose of impressing the truths it contains more deeply in the Indian mind.

Father Brabant, a Victoria missionary who often heard Father Demers, then Bishop of Vancouver Island, speak in Chinook, says of his mastery of it, "of all the Chinook scholars whom it has been my good fortune to hear, the first Bishop of our diocese, the late Rt. Rev. Modeste Demers, was without a peer. It was a great treat to listen to the use he made of the jargon when in conversation with a native. To hear him preach in it, or make a public speech, was something never to be forgotten."

To him, as young Father Demers, belongs the credit of preaching the first sermon in Chinook. This he did shortly after his arrival in the country, 1838, at Fort Vancouver, Washington, on the banks of the Columbia, before a large congregation of Indians, after having studied the jargon less than four weeks. To him, also, our Catholic missionaries of this, and of a past generation, are indebted for a Chinook vocabulary, for a concise and very useful Catechism of the Catholic Church, and for many hymns which the natives learn so eagerly and sing with so much delight. However, his most extraordinary work as a Chinook scholar is a translation in all its length of the proclamation of Pius IX, of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It was printed in New York. The text given in Latin was followed by the translation in Chinook.

On the whole, the Chinooks seemed to look upon the priest with unconcern, so Father Demers was somewhat doubtful of getting a hearing at Astoria. The Astorias proved to be not so depraved as the other tribal branches and more ready to receive the word of God. Father Demers began his mission by going among the Indians ringing a bell in one hand and holding up a Catholic Ladder in the other. He was more successful than he had expected. The attendance at his instructions and the baptism of children detained him there twenty-six days.

From Astoria he went to Fort Vancouver, June 17, to



minister to the brigades going north and south. After a ten days' mission at the Fort, he started with the northern brigade, under Chief Factor Ogden for Colville, via the one route, the Great Dalles, Walla Walla and the Pelouse River. Wherever the caravan stopped the alert missionary made the most of his time teaching the truths of salvation to whites, Indians and half-breeds. Were they few, or many, little did it matter to him, if only he could lead some, even one, of his listeners, to stand firmly in the true fold.

He was doomed to suffer much on this journey to Colville. We remember that on his first trip he was deserted by his guide. On this his second mission there, he had to endure heat from a broiling sun, and the lack of water for himself and for his horse. This discomfort and privation lasted the greater part of ten days, from Walla Walla to the end of his journey. During this trip his escape from danger on two occasions may be attributed to implicit trust in God which never failed him even in most unexpected situations. While camping out one night he was awakened by a sinister whistling and by something creeping along his covering. Looking up he saw a huge rattlesnake with flaming eyes and with projecting fangs ready to strike him. Terrified, he made the Sign of the Cross. Instantly, as if pursued by a feared enemy the dangerous reptile slid away.

Somewhat later, Father Demers suggested to the guide and to the men with him that they should take another road than that on which they were going. There seemed no reason for changing to a roundabout road and the men demurred. It was Father Demers' way to win by gentle persuasion. The men yielded. They were very thankful that they had, for the next day they learned that Indians had been lying in wait to kill and scalp them. How did Father Demers know of the hidden danger?

At Colville, the missionary father was received like an old friend. Thanks to Mr. Brown, a zealous Catholic who had continued the teaching begun by Father Demers on his first visitation, the Indians knew their prayers and had a better

understanding of our holy religion. After the departure of the priest at the end of this visit, Mr. Brown was joined in the good work of instructing the Indians by Chief Colville the head of the tribe. This new Christian became an apostle among his people. He never tired explaining the Catholic Ladder.

Wonderful were the results everywhere obtained through the Catholic Ladder. Sectarian preachers were quick to see its instructive value with the Indians and soon they produced one which they called the Evangelical Ladder. One among them challenged the priest, whom he called an intruder, to come forward that they might test the respective merits of the ladders in the presence of the Indians. He who had thrown the gauntlet lost completely when he had to branch off at the Reformation. His defeat brought over ten tribes to Catholic belief.

From Colville, Father Demers went to Okanagan for the second time. Of this "tolerably numerous tribe," he said, "All that is needed to make them fervent Christians is some one to teach them Christian doctrines." And so time has proved. To this day, a hundred years after this forecast was made, the Indians of the Okanagan are all Catholics.

Here also, as in Colville, the work of the missionary was supplemented by the devoted service of an excellent Christian, Mr. Robillard. Here, too, the proof of success was in the dissolving of illegitimate unions. This entailed more than the saying of prayers, the singing of hymns and the rendering of speeches on the Missionary's instructions. Where for some reason the marriage could not be blessed—it meant hard renunciation, the sundering of flesh, of heart and of blood ties, and in a certain sense of the laws of common Justice—and yet, unless all this were done, there could be no communion with the Catholic Church. The law of God, of which the Church is the organ, has always required sacrifice. Wherever sacrifice has been found genuine it has been rewarded a hundredfold.

The regret felt by Father Demers and Father Blanchet on leaving places where the doctrine of self-sacrifice, which they

had come to inculcate was so well received, was that there were no other priests to share in the apostolate and to preserve what had been gained. Father Demers wrote to his Alma Mater: "How much lasting good could be done if only a sufficient number of priests were here to foster the good disposition of these poor savages among whom we find a real craving for the things of God." Four years were to elapse before this fervent plea was answered in the coming of Fathers Boldue and Langlois.

Naturally a few days, or a few weeks at most of priestly ministration followed by months without it did not stimulate perseverance. The sowers of cockle came and filled in the breaches. "Your priests have forgotten you," they said. And even if there were no "sowers of cockle," as Father Blanchet pertly remarks, "They did not need twelve months to forget what they had learned in a few weeks."

Nor were the missionaries unaware of the inconstancy of their neophytes. At the very beginning of their ministry Father Demers wrote: "Experience has taught us not to rely too much on the first demonstrations of the Indians nor on the first dispositions they manifest. Those of Cowlitz promise better success."

Besides, he admits how trying and discouraging it was for the poor people to have to listen to three, and even to four interpreters, for the missionaries had not the gift of tongues to reach all tribes.

But the two priests never lost heart. They were too absorbed in the Master's cause for that. They faced difficulties unwaveringly, though they could count on only partial success in overcoming them. For example, there was polygamy to fight against which, though not so general as formerly, still prevailed among the tribes, and superstition that was even harder to eradicate, for it was as the very marrow of the bones in all Indians. And above all there was subjection to the Tamanwas, the Sorcerer—Medicine Man. The Medicine Man often exercised a fiendish profession handed down from father to son. Sometimes even women assumed this power of doctor-

ing. They exercised absolute control over the poor, duped, trustful patient. The Tamanwas existed with the same methods in all the tribes west of the Rockies.

There were no stipulated fees for treatment, nor would the patient insult the Medicine Man by asking what was to be paid for consultation or attendance on the case. When an Indian died some one was held responsible, and woe be to him on whom suspicion fell. His life was in constant danger. If he was not killed outright he was forced to give up all he possessed. The least indemnification would be the killing of his horses.

Compensation for the loss of one life either by natural or accidental death by the killing of another was common all the way up to Alaska. The writer was in Juneau in 1888 when there was a landslide on the Basin Road. Three men were buried, a white man, a Sitka Indian and a Wrangel Indian. The two first were never recovered, the latter was saved. The Sitkans were peeved that the Wrangel had come out alive and were on the watch to do away with him. That a white man had been killed did not matter to them.

Nor was this enough. They determined to compensate for the loss of one of their tribe by selecting a victim of equal rank, and this failing they could take two lives—anybody's. Father Althoff the missionary said, "I am just as likely to be murdered as any one. It is rather an uncanny feeling to go about and not know what moment you may be struck fatally in the back."

Superstition followed the Indian to the grave. When the Tamanwas had exhausted all the resources of his fiendish art, which tended but to increase the malady, and the sick person died, the attendant scarcely allowed his eyes to close before he covered them with a pearl shell bandage. His nostrils were filled with aikwa, a money shell. He was clad in his best clothes and wrapped in a blanket. Four posts were then driven in the ground and transverse pieces laid across. The corpse was placed face downwards and turned towards the river and laid in a



canoe. This was covered with many mats and hoisted on the posts.

Offerings to the dead were next in order. If the dead man had been a chief or a great warrior, his gun, his powder horn and bag were placed beside him. Valuable objects such as wooden plates, axes, kettles, bows, arrows, skins, etc., were placed upon sticks to form a hedge around the canoe. The tribute of tears followed; day after day mournful shouting and wailing might be heard far and wide.

The missionaries from whom we get these accounts tell us that the Indians cling so tenaciously to this ancestral form of disposal of the dead that a baptized child having died and been treated in this manner, Father Blanchet could not induce its relatives to take the little body out of the canoe for Christian burial. He adds, "This tenacity to such rites, and the Tamanwas, have taught us to be more prudent in baptizing children, and not to trust the repeated promises they make us not to have recourse to the Medicine Man in case of a baptized child."

Another custom which on the surface seems harmless enough, but which led to disorder and immorality, was that of piercing the ears of a two- or three-year-old child. The ceremony was carried on with pomp and gravity. It began with a sumptuous feast—not sumptuous according to the modern taste. The parent invited gluttons and the unemployed. Dancing and jollification ensued and continued for several days. The father then pierced the ears of his child and with bleeding hands hung certain ornaments on them. The festivities closed with the guests dividing among themselves and carrying away all the goods which the owner possessed—food, furniture, etc. The holder of the feast was then reduced to poverty, but little did he care; fame meant more than riches to him. He had proved himself a wealthy man—a tyee.

Sorcery and jugglery were common to nearly all the savages. Their credulity in attributing misfortune and mishaps to evil spirits, were they ever so trifling and self-explanatory, blinded them to most obvious facts. The superstition, how-

ever, which exercised the greatest havoc because of its almost daily practice, was the belief in the power of the Tamanwas.

The Indians were also addicted to hand play and other games of hazard in which they often lost all they owned. Their method of gambling consisted in one group of players winning twenty three-inch long sticks from their opponents. First, the sticks were evenly divided, ten to each side. The article gambled for was set between the two rows of players. The winning was by guesswork. A player took in his hand two bones, easily covered in the fist. One of the bones was marked, the other unmarked. He then twirled his hand rapidly this way, that, sliding the bones from one hand to the other. Each side gave a guess as to which hand held the marked bone. The guessing has been known to last sixteen consecutive hours before the twenty sticks were all on one side. The game is played in the same way today.

Of another nature is a no less difficult obstacle to the work of uplifting the natives. The Indians were subject to an awful contagious disease greatly resembling leprosy. The person attacked with the disease fell into a state of complete putrefaction. So offensive was his condition that it was well-nigh impossible to go near him, and all remedies were ineffectual to stay the intolerable malady.

Notwithstanding the obstacles to be met, the missionaries considered the response given to their teaching almost phenomenal. "But," says Father Blanchet, "let no one imagine that all this was effected by enchantment. No, on the contrary, we had to make many journeys, undergo much worry and fatigue, and practise great patience. All this was essential if we would caution the flock against seduction and error; enlighten the ignorant, recall the wandering and bring the lost sheep back to the fold."

But the missionaries had also their joys. Among these, in the first year of their ministry, November, 1838-1839, was the arrival of two large cases of much needed church supplies from eastern Canada, and two bells weighing respectively fifty and eighty pounds. The pleased recipients also mention in their

grateful recognition of the gifts, "a beautiful folio edition of the Bible," a gift of Rev. Anthony Parent of the Quebec Seminary.

Father Demers relates that the day after the arrival of his bell at Cowlitz, October 14, 1839, a frame forty feet high was erected for it. He concludes the account of its being blessed and put in position with, "I considered it an honor to ring the first Angelus myself." He further reveals his pious emotion in the lines, "For the first time a consecrated bell was heard in the Cowlitz Valley." And he goes on, "To describe the emotion of all present on hearing the bell would be difficult. All fell on their knees and adored the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It was as if they had heard the Angel's message addressed to Mary in her humble home in Nazareth, saying with profound respect, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.'"

Giving free course to his feelings he continues, "Ah, if all the faithful in Canada only heard the ringing of the Angelus with the same respect as do our poor Indians, who have not yet received the grace of Baptism, what fruitful benedictions would they not derive from it!"

Father Blanchet also reports, "On Christmas Day the Angelus began to be rung three times a day in honor of the Incarnation, and to the glory of Mary Immaculate."

A glad note rings in the closing lines of this first year of missionary labor, "Great was the joy of the people of Cowlitz and of Willamette in having a resident priest in each place, and in having Midnight Mass in their churches."

The first report sent to the Missionary Bureau at Quebec embraces fifteen months and contains these statistics: baptisms 287; marriages 76; burials 14; abjurations 4.

Beyond all other joy for the missionaries was the holy consolation felt in the conversions of intellectual, well-meaning adults, whether Indian or white.

---

## CHAPTER X

---

### CHIEFS WELCOME CATHOLICISM

IT MUST have been a great encouragement to the missionaries in the initial stage of their apostolate to see the advances made towards religion by the chiefs of the powerful Indian tribes. These native leaders came considerable distances to see the priests and to hear their doctrine.

Allowing for the novelty of seeing the black gowns, of whom they had so frequently heard, credit must be given them also for sincerity of purpose. There is Tslalakum, chief of the Whidby Island tribe, already mentioned, who was particularly "distinguished for his good sense, his generosity and frankness." And Chief Tamakoon, one of the early converts of 1839 who ruled over one hundred and fifty Cascade Indians. He understood the Catholic Ladder so well that he could speak on it correctly for hours at a time.

There is Chief Harkely from Yakima who came with his family and some of his people to the missionary's residence at St. Paul's to be instructed. He spent three weeks absorbing the lessons of Christianity, and returned home with a cross, prayer beads and the Catholic Ladder.

A chief from Okanagan sent word to the priest at St. Paul's saying that he was ready to come down with his people, if the missionary could receive him and asking him what to do.

A chief from Rapids on the Columbia arrived at St. Paul's for the winter with his wife, three children and a brother-in-law. After being duly instructed the family was baptized, the chief himself receiving the name of Joseph.

Chief Snowhomish came to Cowlitz to ask Father Demers to come and direct the building of a house of prayer "for which the lumber was all prepared."

And the chief of the Spokanes, son of "La Grosse Tete"



(big head), in spite of his father's opposition, journeyed to the missionaries to receive instructions. Coming with nine others by way of Nisqually and obliged to make long portages, they had been stripped of their blankets and ordered back by the Chehalises, but they had pushed on.

And there is the remarkable case of Chief Poh-Poh. He came to St. Paul's, 1841, a staunch Methodist. He saw the orphan boys, the wards of the Catholic mission; he met Indian families and other persons; he assisted at the daily exercise and at the explanation of the Catholic Ladder. One's wonder at the intelligence with which the untutored Indian mind took in the facts of Sacred History, is ever on the increase. Poh-Poh followed the trend of events as the explanation went up the Ladder. At the shooting off of the sixteenth century he grasped the truth. The Reformation had branched off from the parent stem. He abjured the heresy. He was insistent on having Father Blanchet go and give a mission to his people. This mission proved the beginning of the downfall of Methodism in his tribe. Poh-Poh's earnestness was proved the following spring when he again came for further instructions, and for the strengthening of his faith.

There is that other good chief, Netlam, and Chief Colville already introduced so favorably to us.

There were, however, a few touchy chiefs who at first turned away the missionaries. One such was Chief Wesamus of the Willamette Falls Indian village. When Father Demers went to visit the tribe, and, according to his considerate custom of first calling upon the chief, went to his lodge, the Indian potentate said, "Away with you, we do not want you."

The priest moved away not the least perturbed. Upon inquiry he learned that the chief was offended because the missionary had visited the Clackamas tribe before visiting his own. It was an easy matter for the Man of Peace to give a satisfactory explanation, and to obtain permission to give a mission. This mission was one of his hardest. At first he had to go every day here and there to fetch the lazy Indians to his tent. After a little while, however, they came of their own

accord attracted by the altar, the vestments and the sacred vessels as he explained them.

Father Demers also had his experience with regard to the susceptibility of chiefs for their rank, and the extreme delicacy to be observed in dealing with them. On his way to Langley on the Fraser the great chief of the Tlahams came to meet the priest and his escort. No one had pointed out to Father Demers the chief who passed with the rank and file in the crowd. The mighty man was quite offended. Father Demers was quick to see that something was wrong. He asked his guides what might be the cause. On hearing that he had failed to recognize the chief, he graciously apologized to the magnate who had taken umbrage at the unintentional slight. Being properly appeased the chief gave presents to the innocent offender.

One old hardened chief, named Keiinsno, who had at least the courage of self-knowledge, said to his tribe, "Follow the priest if you like, as for myself I am too bad, and I will die so, for I cannot change."

There was a great rally of chiefs on the occasion of Father Demers going from Fort Vancouver to visit the distant Fraser River Indians. The priest started off with an old and infirm Canadian. All along the lodges on Puget Sound he was accompanied by our good, old friend, Chief Tslalakum. Everywhere he heard of the ferocity of the numerous cannibal tribe of Cowichans who often frequented the lower Fraser. Towards these the tireless missionary was directing his steps. Rumor had reached him even that they would murder him as soon as they spied him.

Besides this cruel tribe of Cowichans there were the Yougletas near the mouth of the Fraser. The chief occupation of these latter was to make raids on other tribes, pillage their belongings and kill their prisoners or make slaves of them. This year again they were prepared to renew their horrible carnage, for which they had in their Indian parlance "sharpened their canoes."

Father Demers was not dismayed. He went calmly ahead.

Chief Tslalakum realizing the dangers the priest was facing,

volunteered to go with him. At Cross Island they were joined by three other chiefs who offered to escort them in case they would be attacked by the enemy. At their setting out a crowd of Indians stood on the shore, wishing them well. It shows the Indian's trust in Divine Power that they encouraged the priests and their retinues saying, "Go friends, do not fear, our father, the priest, is with you. He will speak to the Great Chief up above. It is for Him you are exposing your lives. If you die it will be for Him and for the priest."

No doubt this prayer ascended to the throne of the Almighty, for during the night three menacing shouts from different directions were heard, but the travelers rowed rapidly on in strict silence. In the morning they reached the friendly tribe of Skadjats and found the fort there, as elsewhere along the route, surrounded by a strong palisade as protection against the assaults of the enemy, the terrible Yougletas.

Father Demers stayed with the Skadjats for some days to give a mission, and then reinforced by two chiefs and their followers, proceeded to the camp of the Wholerneils. "Le pletre," as they called the priest, was received with unusual delight and enthusiasm.

He writes: "Fish, fresh, smoked, dried, even already baked fell like a shower at our feet." Almost regretfully he adds, "I have not the merit of earth's tribulations." And then with soul aglow, and humility of heart, he bursts forth in an apostrophe to the missionaries of the Orient which reveals his desire of martyrdom. "Saintly Chinese missionaries," he exclaims, "would that I could kiss your feet, and kiss the soil bedewed with your blood. You are the lambs sent among wolves. You have all the work of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Here I am honored; I am feasted. I will not have a drop of blood to offer to my Eternal Father, not a single drop in the bitter chalice which His Divine Son, my holy Redeemer, drank to the dregs."

"Holy missionary," we in our turn say, "if you think nothing of the thousands of miles between you and the homeland, nothing of your continuous and dangerous travels by canoe,

on foot and on horseback; if you consider as naught your days of wearisome instruction to dull minds, your miserable lodgings; the heat and cold; if in your estimation it is nothing to eat nauseating food, and live with uncouth people incapable of estimating the price of such self-immolation, heroic missionary, abide God's time."

Continuing on their way, the party approached the vicinity of the dreaded Cowichans. But lo, instead of hailing the oncoming flotilla with warwhoops, the Cowichans sent a deputation to accompany the black gown and his attendants to the shore. Marvel of marvels, bloodthirsty foes met in sincere amity, and the passage of the priest was everywhere a triumphant procession.

At Binet Bay the visitors had to make a ten-hour portage. Quite exhausted they reached the fort. They were received by Mr. Yale, the commander, and six hundred Canadians, Kanakas and Iroquois. The flag was hoisted and a salvo of seven guns fired.

What amazed Father Demers on this trip was the fact that wherever he went along the Fraser, for the first time, the Indians could bless themselves and sing a few hymns. The Indians though so scattered had gradually found the means of passing on to others some little of the instructions they had received the preceding year.

Among the Indians assembled at Binet Bay was a chief of the fierce Yougletas, the terror of all the tribes. He attended the instructions assiduously and brought one of his children to be baptized. This was a happy augury for the reception of Christianity along the Lower Fraser.

Instructions given nearly all day long by a priest fitted with supernatural powers for the task, and heard by poor Indians most desirous of heavenly things, were followed by wonderful fruits. Father Demers in his account of this mission says it was most consoling. "The meetings were held on a level prairie and attended by from fifteen to sixteen hundred Indians. God blessed us, for on September 3rd, I baptized ninety-nine children; on the 4th, fifty-six, and on the 5th, one



hundred thirty-six. On the 6th, I was surrounded by a crowd which, without exaggeration, I estimated at three thousand, and I baptized seventy-one children. Never was the pardon of injuries so manifest as during these reunions. Divine influence was evident to all. The mere presence of the priest stilled grudges, blotted out aversions and united in touching accord the hearts of diverse people who had been vowed in implacable hatred, and ever on the lookout for bloody retaliation."

On the evening of September 7th, the Teits, numbering three hundred six, arrived at Langley in forty canoes, after having escaped an ambuscade of Miskiivins. They heralded themselves with a discharge of musketry, with singing and great jubilation. One is amazed to hear of the polite customs that existed among these savages. Father Demers relating all about this remarkable congress says, "After the presentation of the usual gifts," what these gifts were we are not told; perhaps they were fish and furs.

We are told by the daughter of Dr. Chismore, ship-doctor on the vessel that carried the United States officials to transact the purchase of Alaska, that the chief of the Wrangels, Miss Chismore's maternal grandfather, sent four slaves carrying an otter skin ceremoniously on their shoulders, as a gift to the head of the commission. That was indeed a royal act, an act done royally.

Father Demers continues his account: "After the presentation, there was general smoking of the pipe of peace. The next day I baptized one hundred seventeen Indians."

Apparently these were adult baptisms, for on former occasions the missionary invariably specified the baptism of children. If then, as we are given to infer, these were adults, they must have been previously prepared for the reception of this sacrament of regeneration, for, all along, we have been able to admire the amount of instruction required, and the caution taken before the sacrament was conferred on adults. In fact, very few received it without long preparation, and the test of probable perseverance.

On the other hand baptism to children who had not yet

reached the age of reason was freely bestowed, at least such was the practice in the beginning of missionary visitations. As the death rate among children under seven was very high, baptism opened the gates of heaven to countless numbers.

The baptism of only one child is considered of such moment to the enlightened faith of missionaries that Father Blanchet notes as providential, "On my way to St. Paul's I stopped to get a paddle and baptized a dying child." Another time the wind and storm made it expedient for the men to turn the canoe into the shelter of a cove. Camping there was a family with a dying child. The priest came up, took in the situation and baptized the baby, and as he afterwards said, "As if the wind had directed our canoe to that unfrequented place just to procure this grace to the infant, it at once subsided and we were able to resume our journey."

The peace of the grand gathering at Langley on the Fraser was disturbed by an act of cruelty that deeply afflicted the kind heart of Father Demers. An unfortunate slave had been punished for insubordination by his chief who stabbed him three times with a dagger. On hearing the cries of the wounded man the missionary hastened to him. There lay the wounded slave bleeding almost to death. His cruel master stretched out on a mat looked on with fierce eyes. But in those fierce eyes, the priest thought he detected shame and regret. "I turned to him," he says, "with all the indignation I felt for his brutality. I told him I had not expected to witness such horrors, and that the time for my leaving the place of such a heinous crime could not come fast enough. With that I left him. What was my surprise a little later, to see the culprit covered with confusion, listening at the back of the crowd but not daring to show himself. I continued my instruction without paying any attention to him, and then I retired to the fort. The miserable man, no longer able to bear his remorse, made his way through the crowd that was accompanying me, and coming up to me, fell on his knees, confessed his crime, deplored the bad temper that had made him break his good resolutions, begged pardon and promised amendment.

"In the presence of the whole multitude in tears, I gave him a severe talk on the sad effects of anger, which in this case and for a rather slight provocation might cause the death of a fellow being. I left him at that, but was much impressed over the grandeur of soul in a savage who, as yet, had only imperfect notions of the Divine Law.

"I came away from my mission on the Fraser filled with admiration for the beautiful spectacle I had seen of so many different tribes, associating in perfect intimacy, and depositing at the foot of the cross their grievances against one another, that they might form one heart with which to offer the incense of their prayers to a common Father.

"This marvelous union astonished the natives themselves, and they could not sufficiently admire it. The evenings were spent in singing hymns, or in listening to the raised voice of a chief making edifying discourses to his people on the truths exposed to them. In fine, it was a universal impulse of faith and fervor. While I was shaking hands with new arrivals, and this took time, when they came by hundreds, the other Indians would sing and pray before a ten by twelve and a half foot Catholic Ladder which I had raised."

But the mission came to an end and the good priest had to go on to carry the Faith to others. How pitiful it was for him whose work was so hopefully begun to have to leave his dear neophytes to themselves indefinitely, without the guidance of a priest.

After an absence of forty-four days Father Demers returned to Fort Vancouver. He was received as one returning from the grave. Prayers had been said for the repose of his soul.

During this mission to the Fraser Indians the Catholic missionary, besides converting the Indians, had discomfited several would-be teachers of the Gospel. There were thirteen or fourteen of them in all the Columbia territory, against two Catholic priests. The majority of these ministers were men without education; men who had been sailors or circus drivers. It was, therefore, impossible to maintain with them the social relations which prevail among cultured minds. It was strife.

One can conceive the means employed by such agents to attract to their ends, more or less mercenary, the poor Indians who are fickle by nature and easily won over by sordid motives. In his classical way Father Demers says, "Like the Jews in the rebuilding of the Temple, we had the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other, and had the sorrow of seeing some of the stones which we had laid in the Sacred edifice with infinite trouble, ruthlessly pulled away."

Difficulties of some sort or other were always cropping up. One day did not one of the Fort Langley chiefs begin, for effect, to hear the confessions of the Indians. He reasoned this way: "Since the priests do it, it must be a good thing." And so he gave absolution right and left. Of course, it was downright mummary, but it demonstrates the naive, religious element in these poor children of the woods.

Notwithstanding evils of greater or less importance, Father Demers abounding in his holy purpose, wrote in a spirit of faith and of hope, "God will, no doubt, have pity on these poor souls, and the prayers of the good will obtain for this Columbia region prodigies of mercy like those which were so frequent at the cradle of Christianity."

"The preachers of the Gospel would reap but meagre results from their labor, unless those who apply themselves to prayer and mortification called down copious showers of grace to irrigate the evangelical field."—LEO XIII.



---

## CHAPTER XI

---

### WITH THE STUART LAKE BRIGADE

FATHER DEMERS was now to go on the greatest and most important mission so far undertaken west of the Rockies. It was to far-off Alexandria and to Fort St. James on Stuart Lake in New Caledonia. The perilous journey of some fourteen hundred miles was accomplished by the three chief modes of travel of that time and country—by canoe, on horseback and on snowshoes. As it is God's mark of love for His friends not to lessen hardships for such as wish to follow in the way of the Cross, He willed that poor Father Demers should suffer from acute rheumatism from the time he came west to the end of his life.

But physical pain was not his only personal suffering. A sacrifice which he felt keenly on leaving for his ten months' journey to New Caledonia was that he would not be near to welcome Father Langlois and Father Boldue who were shortly to arrive from Quebec, via Cape Horn, to share in the Oregon apostolate. Oh, it would have been so good to see and hear some one from "Home" after those four years of waiting! But this was not to be just yet.

June 29, 1842, Father Demers joined the Hudson's Bay Brigade north-bound in command of Chief Factor Peter Skene Ogden, who had come to Fort Vancouver for the yearly supplies destined for the forts in New Caledonia.

Surely, we know by this time Father Demers' faculty for making friends. Mr. Peter S. Ogden was also a very sociable man and as jovial as he was brave. The two were most congenial companions. This, and the kindly attentions and good-humored jests of the host, greatly relieved the monotony of the seemingly endless journey.

Father Demers adds his personal description of the journey to scores that may be found in different sources but, this coming from him, is full of interest for us. "The brigades which radiated north and south from Vancouver were conducted the same as those which came from Red River across Canada. A high official was always in charge, but the guide held chief command. He had to know the road well, and received good pay."

In the first canoe, or at the head of the pack train, the officer in charge presented an imposing figure. Our narrator says, "Mr. P. S. Ogden, chief factor, in black broadcloth, leather gaiters, ample cape lined with colored silk, and wearing a tall, beaver hat, got into the canoe, and took me under his special care. I can never be sufficiently grateful to him for his general attentions.

"We had a big send-off as we left Vancouver; people shouted their good wishes and blew their bugles. When fairly on the river the voyageurs began their singing, which was soon stopped by the need of poling up dalles and rapids.

"I had already been as far as Okanagan, the head of navigation on the Columbia for the New Caledonia Brigade. Here I renewed the experience with pack horses which we had crossing the mountains in 1838, but on the main highway between Oregon and New Caledonia, three and four times as many horses are needed.

"At Okanagan the huge amount of stuff to be distributed at the northern posts is taken from the boats and loaded on the horses. All being ready the chief factor, always in his black, broadcloth regalia, takes the lead. Behind him come the three or four hundred pack horses. Each animal exhibits some characteristic all his own—some show temper; others are (non-chalant) leisurely; one goes this way, another that, and the jovial drivers try to keep them going—nilly-willy.

"All this equipage of men, horses and luggage makes the march tedious and laborious; the only stop in the day is at camping time between three and four o'clock. The preparation for the day's start is over at nine or ten o'clock. It takes time



*By Courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company*

### **"WITH THE STUART LAKE BRIGADE"**

Fort St. James, situated at the north of the Nakraztli River on Stuart Lake in the northern interior of British Columbia was for a long time the capital of New Caledonia. On November 17, 1828, it was visited by Governor George Simpson, who was welcomed by James Douglas, afterwards Sir James Douglas, Governor of British Columbia. 1821-1864





to bring the horses, which have been enjoying full liberty, together. At last, this is done; all are there. Then the neighing of the horses, the shouts and curses of the impatient men, the general wrangling, and the orders of the chief is confusion worse confounded. Breakfast on dried salmon is taken seated on the grass, horses are mounted, and at ten, we begin to move onward. The progress is exceedingly slow and full of incidents which are more or less disagreeable. An inflamed atmosphere, a scorching sun and suffocating sand; a hill to climb; a ravine to cross—these are some of the happenings of the day. During the first few days, besides the inconvenience of being in the saddle on such uneven ground with my altar, my bed, my stores and even my kitchen, I felt a general discomfort. We consider ourselves fortunate if some freakish sand-storm so thick that we cannot see a yard ahead, does not force itself down our throats or into our nostrils, and blind our eyes.

“The hum of conversation is heard with a monotony which is only interrupted at the crossing of a stream or river. Then there is a get-together. The horses whinny, the men get cross; they shove one another, they tumble over and often tumble into the water. . . . This excites hilarity and enlivens talk for the rest of the day.

“Buried in these great deserts, among a class of men solely occupied with earning their earthly goods for the profits of those who hire them, a man whose heart and mind are formed to think of things above, and who fosters the noblest aspirations, a priest in fine, could experience nothing but disgust—an unbearable loneliness were he not sustained by holy faith.

“While these hundreds of mercenaries wear themselves out in procuring perishable riches only one man, inspired by the holy folly of the Cross, places himself in the vortex to seek for souls and open heaven to them. The world does not see that in his isolation and privation of all things, his soul is calm and his heart happy.”

Leaving Okanagan the brigade went its course to Fort Thompson, the present Kamloops site. Here Father Demers

baptized a few Indians who had hastened "to have the happiness of hearing this man, who spoke of a supreme Master who was above; also of another life in heaven and of many other unknown things."

Other forts along the way were Chilcotin in the valley of the Chilco; Alexandria, so named after Sir Alexander Fraser the explorer; Fort George on the Fraser; McLeod, Fraser, and Babine on lakes of the same names. The natives who lived on the slopes of these waters were considered quite ferocious.

The Fort Alexandria district was inhabited by the "Carriers." There are two opinions about the origin of this name. One is that having no beasts of burden the people packed their belongings on their backs. The other is founded on the practice which required that at the death of a parent the son should place bones and ashes from the cremated body in a leather bag and wear it around his neck for three years. At the end of this time the bones were taken out of the bag and deposited in a box which was firmly fixed on a stake fourteen or fifteen feet long. The stake stood planted in the ground in perpetual remembrance of the deceased. The ceremony was followed by a funeral feast to which relatives and friends were invited. Mourning finished at that.

"Many times I have seen these funerals," says Father Demers. "They always inspired me with sad reflections on the intellectual and moral degradation of these poor people. At the top of the stake was the term of their hopes, their happiness, their misery."

But this is not all. The ceremony of cremation was practised with fearful cruelty. If, for example, the wife of the deceased, in the judgment of the executors, had not merited the good will of her husband, she was thrown on the pyre, on top of the half-consumed corpse, and left there till she was thoroughly scorched and her hair burned. This was not the end of her expiation. She was withdrawn and sold into slavery for three years. After this period of bondage she was allowed to live as she could in the tribe.

What sights for a missionary! Father Demers relates them

himself. Only that so holy a man of God has left his observations do we repeat them here. For instance, the following: "Entirely given over to the slavery of their senses these people ignore the laws of decency, so natural to mankind, such as all respect for the ties of blood and of marriage. Promiscuity is a sort of public right. Suicide, murder and a hundred other evils are dumbly undermining this unfortunate nation.

And yet, with all this, the missionary accomplished a little lasting good among the Carriers of Fort Alexandria. In 1867, one of their chiefs met a priest and asked him to go and visit his people up north. He went, and found that in spite of much evil that had been revived in the lapse of twenty-four years since the visit of the missionary, the people had not altogether forgotten the practices of Christian life. How well Father Demers had sown the good seed among them!

The Carriers were taller and better built than other Indians. The women, too, were tall and noted for corpulence not seen in other native women of New Caledonia. They were also better garbed. They wore dresses of beaver or moose skin, which they had made to cover themselves decently enough. Over this they had a sort of apron of deer or salmon skin, some eighteen inches broad and reaching to the knees. Both the men and women perforated their noses and inserted a piece of bone, or oyster shell, through the opening. The lassies improved on this style by putting a wooden peg through the vomer, and hanging threaded beads at each end. There is no accounting for tastes in fashion!

Little girls to the age of eleven wore a veil of fringed deer-skin edged with beads. Young boys verging on manhood tied cords, twisted with swan's-down, below each knee. Much the same idea is found among the Kaffirs of Africa who wear brass anklets.

With all their barbarity Divine Providence did not overlook these degraded people. He provided them with salmon, almost their only food, for what idea could the inhabitants of that sterile country have of cultivating land? It is easy to conceive that their mode of life was not conducive to longevity.

"There were three causes for the short span of their earthly existence: their food and their filth; their brutish habits so pregnant with mortal disease; and their lodgings. Their houses were underground hovels to which one descended by a would-be ladder of wooden notches. The natives lived there stretched on the damp ground, huddling near the fire, and suffocated by the smoke, little of which could escape through a hole at the top of the dugout.

Father Demers, who was often obliged to visit these habitations, could not remain in them more than half an hour at a time. A feeling of general indisposition forced him out for a respite. In such lodgings the frequent attacks of rheumatism to which the zealous missionary had been subject were so aggravated by sharp and violent pains that ever after, when writing he had to support his right arm with his left hand. Many a missionary has left the field with far less reason. Not he.

"He who perseveres to the end shall be crowned."

Continuing his journey to the north along the impetuous Fraser River, the missionary found quite a few well-disposed Indians. He was delighted one day by the intelligent remark of one of them who, having heard the account of the last Judgment, said, "Yes, God will do with men as we do with salmon. He will separate the bad and throw them aside and will keep the good." The good Indian applied intuitively our Lord's parable:

the kingdom of heaven  
is like to a net cast into the sea,  
and gathering together all kinds of fishes  
which when it was filled  
they drew out  
and sitting by the shore  
they chose out the good into vessels,  
but the bad they cast forth.

September 16th, after being on the northward march one hundred ten days, the brigade arrived at Fort St. James on Lake Stuart, the residence of the commander, Mr. Peter S. Ogden, the journey's end. Poor missionary, after the weeks of



hard travel, he could only spend three days at this post. He tried to make up by doing the utmost good in the briefest moment of time. He was much edified by the attendance of the whites and natives at Holy Mass and at the instructions as well as by the good dispositions of all.

Even here, to this farthest outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Catholic faith had found its way. And this was brought about through Mrs. Peter Ogden, wife of the commander. Mrs. Ogden was an Indian princess connected with every great chief of the North-West, a fact which opened the way of safe travel for her husband where few dared to go. It may also have prompted his exceptional consideration for the Catholic priest. Mrs. Ogden brought the fruit of her baptism, which she had received east of the Rockies, to New Caledonia. She was one of those of whom St. Paul says, "To one, indeed, by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom." She became a propagator of the true faith in her surroundings. When Father Demers came, the natives were predisposed to listen to his teaching.

Fort St. James seems to have been unusually favored with religious-minded people. In 1809, before Mrs. Ogden's time, the fort was under the command of Chief Factor Daniel William Harmon, a God-fearing man from Connecticut. Left to his own spiritual guidance, and living among scenes of constant barbarity, he nevertheless practised rules bordering on the eremitical. Besides fasting and self-denial, he devoted one day each month to absolute silence, prayer and meditation. He was one out of ten thousand who had the courage to take his native consort, the mother of several children, to Montreal with him and to have his marriage with her lawfully celebrated.

All too soon, on September 24th, Father Demers had to begin the return journey. After a five-days' rapid descent of the Fraser, he was again at Fort Alexandria. Great was his happiness on being able to testify that his words had done some good among these debased people.

Under his direction, and according to his plan, they readily

lent themselves to building a "House of prayer." A cross was erected at one end of the gables and a chimney at the other. Father Demers, who spent part of the winter here, under Mr. A. C. Anderson's roof, said Mass in the humble chapel for the first time on December 14, 1842. Such was the practical correspondence to his teaching of a people reputed the most immoral of all the immoral tribes of North America.

It may be that these Carriers, of whom the missionary had said that "they outdid beasts by their abominable lives," not being again visited by a priest for two decades and more, fell from their good intentions, but never again were they quite so wicked as the missionary had found them at his first coming among them.

In the course of the winter, that is on January 3rd, Father Demers visited the Atnans,<sup>1</sup> a two days' trip from Fort Alexandria. Was it to counterbalance the depravity which he had just encountered among the Carriers, that from the fulness of his heart he was able to write, "I had consolations here that I had never felt since God called me to the knowledge of His Holy Name."

The courageous Indians had built a chapel, which though it boasted a real chimney had windows without panes. He tells us somewhat gayly, "We succeeded in putting up skins in guise of window panes, and we were well, very well off. But, vexing disappointment! Some malicious, hungry dogs began to eat our windows. We had to set traps and catch several of the culprits before the gluttonous scandal ended.

"I was lodged in a house, sufficiently entitled to such a name but it had no furniture. I always have tools in my kit when journeying, so I made use of them to fasten a board on the wall that answered the purpose of a table. I made two benches, one for the chapel and one for my house. I built a suitable altar. Nothing was now wanting to me. One has to be in the North to appreciate the value of things."

Like all primitive people of America, Atnans had peculiar

<sup>1</sup> A tribe located at the outlet of the Black Water River into the Nechako. These Atnans were long ago wiped out by smallpox.

notions regarding the deluge. According to their tradition, a child was carried off by an owl—the owl figures largely in totems. The father of the owl-kidnapped child having made many fruitless searches and unsuccessful wanderings, through spite at the loss of his child flung an arrow into a lake. The waters began to swell, rise and spread over the earth until they covered the highest mountains. The father began to climb the mountains, and catching hold of floating objects succeeded in saving his wife, his son and a daughter, whom he tied to his belt. Their children dispersed to different countries, each of which designated its own particular language; hence the diversity of tongues.

According to the Atnans, thunder came from an immense bird, which by flapping its wings excited wind and tempest. This accounts for the thunder bird which is also conspicuous in totem heraldry. In all such absurd manners the Indians explained the phenomena of nature.

Marriage consisted simply in the consent of the parents to give their daughter to the man who asked for her. The custom varied. Among many tribes the child was sold when very young, even in infancy. The price paid might be a gun, a sack of flour or any needed or coveted article. At birth, the child was given the name of a tree, a plant or other object, but never that of an animal. Its birch-bark cradle was ingeniously and cosily made in the shape of a canoe.

A rather strange thing among these Atnans was that one never pronounced his own name. As if ashamed to do so, he depended on another to name him when naming was necessary. Nor did he ever pronounce the name of the dead; the name was too sacred now that it had nothing to do with the living. Suicide was very common. For a trifle such as a loss in gambling, a ruffle in love, a fit of ill humor, for nothing, an Atnan hanged himself.

But the mortal curse in these countries was polygamy. Its universal practice was of immemorable standing. Father Demers, considering the disastrous effects of this heinous passion, cried out in one of his letters, "Only a merciful God can,

by His powerful grace, extirpate a disorder which is so deeply rooted in national life."

The overwhelmed missionary makes an appeal to his countrymen, "Pray, pray generous and feeling Canadians. Heaven propitiated by your prayers will receive into the number of His cherished children, these people who are your brethren under the claim of Creation and Redemption."

This heartrending appeal to the Infinite Mercy which rose from his own heart again and again, to the Throne of God, and his boundless confidence in the Divine Assistance, had with the Atnans, as with others, happy results. Every time he preached the chapel was filled with attentive hearers. Some of the redeeming truths, though ever so little, were carried home to the lodges and bettered morals, just a little.

"At Shuswap," Father Demers recounts in his journal, "such an extraordinarily large crowd of my dear Atnans encumbered the chapel, that one day I could not reach my place without passing over the shoulders of my neophytes, and I went from the doorway to the opposite end of the building without touching the ground."

In New Caledonia, as elsewhere, the missionary was well treated by the Hudson's Bay staff. He shared their life, sat at their table and, like them, ate salmon hardened by a two years' drying process in the sheds. He soon became used to this fare. Not only to this, but to every other condition of existence in those northern wilds. Why could he not bear for priceless souls what so many white men were enduring for furs!

The northbound brigade journey had been made in the finest season of the year, but the southbound was made in its worst months. Wind, cold, snow, unbeaten tracks, everything combined to make the journey most trying.

Let us hear Father Demers describe some of its difficulties—that of camping, for instance: "We carry wooden shovels with which to dig away the snow down to ground level; next we cut pine branches, which we lay in place; on these we put the rigging of our mounts, and our blankets. Others cut fire wood and prepare supper.



"As for the horses, the more tractable are let free, those less so have their forefeet bound together to prevent them from wandering too far from camp. The poor animals dig all night to find the wretched hay buried under the snow. When the snow is three and four feet deep the wild horses are several days without finding anything to eat. Our Canadian horses could not stand such privation. Neither can all the wild horses; they perish by fifties and sixties. So great an item of loss was made a subject of investigation by the Hudson's Bay directors.

"The trouble with the horses only began at Fort Alexandria for the trip from Stuart Lake to this post was made by canoes. Here, the water route was abandoned, it being too risky to carry the valuable furs through the canyons. Pack horses were kept at Alexandria to take the precious furs over the mountain trails to Kamloops, the half-way depot, where a change of horses was made. Rounding up some three hundred horses was, to say the least, quite exciting. Those kept at Kamloops were in fine condition, for unlike the less favored ones of Fort Alexandria they had grazed over the range-land all winter. They were doomed, however, to lose their avoirdupois before reaching Okanagan."

Wherever Father Demers went, he studied the language, composed hymns and translated prayers. While at Kamloops, he did one of those tactful, gracious acts with which his life was strewn. He had baptized an Indian chief to whom he gave the name of Paul. The Indians were at that time looking for a name by which to call the mountain that stands guard over the locality. The nicest feelings of the human heart may be found under uncouth externals. So these Indians with a delicacy that would do credit to refinement, proposed that the mountain be called "Demers" after the missionary. He thanked them for the honor but said it would please him more to have it named "Paul" after the great apostle whose name he had given to the chief.

From Kamloops the pack train continued the overland journey of four hundred miles following lake, shore and river bank southward, through the sage-brush country to Fort

Okanagan. The work of the pack train ended here. The goods, besides furs, consisted of birch bark, pitch, sturgeon oil, pemmican, Indian rice, snowshoes, parchment for windows, buffalo tongues, and moose and buffalo dressed skins. All was here transferred to boats.

In this particular spring of 1843, the snow was still three feet deep and the ice firm on the river when the brigade arrived, so it had to wait three weeks for the barges. "Finally," says Father Demers, "I decided to follow the river with my two poor horses, whose feet were still sore and bleeding from having broken through the snow crust."

It was almost a case of necessity for him to go on. At certain seasons life at the forts was busy and lively, but at the smaller posts which were occupied by only a trader and a clerk, time was uneventful and dreary; such a fort was that of Okanagan. And sometimes the food ran short. This was the case just now. The supplies for the two men who had wintered there had given out. Father Demers and his man were two extra mouths to feed. "We sent a bullet through the head of one of our horses," continues our dear missionary in his droll way. "I can assure you that it was not rolling in fat. However, we put on the pot to boil. But there must be variety in our menu; we tire of turkey, always turkey. There were deer at the fort which had managed to eke out subsistence on the branches of trees; there were also little pigs that were so enfeebled by fasting they could hardly stand. Well, we were hungry men. That sealed their fate. One dish served as bread for the other. I had to keep Lent. It is the first time I observe one of this sort. Do you imagine I was sad? Quite the contrary, I enjoyed the life."

As the express did not arrive, and as his horse was too tired to carry him, Father Demers and his companion continued on foot to Fort Vancouver.

Father Blanchet who had come to the fort for the exercises of Holy Week without expecting to meet his confrère before the arrival of the brigade, was in his room on Holy Thursday,

April 13, when Father Demers came in and surprised him, kneeling in prayer.

What happiness! It was a double resurrection. How fervent was their thanksgiving for the visible protection extended over the zealous missionary during this mission—in which he had covered one thousand four hundred and twenty-five miles—and for the benefits received in their five years of apostolate.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
for brethren to dwell together in unity.

---

## CHAPTER XII

---

### FROM GLORY TO CALVARY

**D**URING the absence of Father Demers in New Caledonia one of the most consoling events in the missionary history of Oregon had taken place. This was the reception into the church of Dr. John McLoughlin, founder and governor of the Hudson's Bay Company west of the Rockies and the Father of Oregon.

Dr. John McLoughlin was born in 1784 at Rivière du Loup in the Province of Quebec. His bringing up was on Scottish lines—Scottish books, and tales; kilts and bagpipes, and finally, as some historians say, a medical course in Edinburgh. He returned to Canada during the Napoleonic wars and joined an uncle who was in the Hudson's Bay service. His promotion was rapid, and soon he was in command of Fort William, the metropolitan fort of the company. In 1824, he was put in charge of the territory west of the Rocky Mountains, called the Columbia Department. This territory covered an area one-third the size of Europe.

Was it United States, or was it British territory? Time, politics and rumors of war would settle the question of boundary. Meanwhile, who cared, except a few hundred individuals in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, and their chief concern it was to keep the country in a wild condition, conducive to the propagation of fur bearing animals.

Eulogistic words seem to fail the biographers of the great Dr. John McLoughlin. One writes: "Of magnificent physique, his six feet four inches perfectly proportioned; endowed with all the qualities of strength and sympathy that touch the human heart." Another has this tribute: "He was brave and fearless; true and just; impulsive, eager, magnetic." And yet another has this praise: "Napoleonic in the swiftness of his



judgment and movements; resolute, chivalrous; of splendid presence and possessed of the greatest kindness of humanity. An extraordinary man, the tutelary genius of the west."

Commodore Charles Wilkes says of him, "He is enthusiastic in disposition and possesses great energy of character. The liberality and freedom from sectarian principles of Dr. McLoughlin may be esteemed from his being hospitable to missionaries of so many protestant denominations, although he is a professed Catholic and has a priest of the same faith officiating daily in the chapel. Religious tolerance is allowed its fullest extent."

Such, and much more, was the man who made the empire over which he ruled. So kind and able a ruler easily won all hearts. One after another he opened forts at Colville, Langley, Simpson, McLoughlin and Nisqually—hundreds of miles apart.

In 1841, immigrants began to come into the fur country. The first contingent brought in four hundred, all United States citizens. In 1845, over three thousand arrived—famished, poor, and having no means of starting life over. What could any humane man do who had it in his power to relieve, but give all possible assistance—feed the hungry, clothe the tattered, provide working implements and lands for all. This Dr. McLoughlin, the governor, did freely and much from his personal resources.

True, the land was still in its natural state but rich beyond conception in agricultural resources. With the coming of the axe and the plow, the hunter and the trapper were driven gradually from the territory. The Hudson's Bay Company's star began to wane. Governor McLoughlin's loyalty to the fur company could not stem the incoming tide of farming people who came to build their homes in the luxuriant soil of the new country and enjoy the mild, equable Oregon climate. He became the benefactor, the father of the new settlers.

No man can serve two masters, so as the Governor's humanity to the immigrants clashed with the interests of the fur trade it brought upon him and his brilliant services the full resentment of the Hudson's Bay Company. Dr. John McLoughlin

resigned. Is ingratitude inherent in the bulk of human nature? The immigrants who owed everything to Dr. McLoughlin turned against him so completely, through self-interest and envy, that from being the richest, most powerful and highest salaried man in the West, he was robbed of everything, and scarcely allowed the use of a roof over his head. It was a total reverse of fortune; a fall from the pinnacle of glory to the foot of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

On the surface, this was not persecution for his conversion to the Catholic Church, but it was indirectly so. The secret is let out when we hear the words of an outsider, "His joining the Church at that particular time was *most untimely*."

This person, "the admirable and picturesque ruler of the Pacific slope, the great White Eagle," so called because of his hair whitened in his thirtieth year—he was in a wreck from which he alone was saved—he, the father of the orphan and of the Hudson's Bay servants, the protector of immigrants, while still enjoying the prestige of the greatest position in the land, gave his allegiance to the one, true, Catholic, Apostolic Church!

Dr. McLoughlin being born of Catholic parents had received infant baptism, December 5, 1784, as may be learned from the parish record at Kamouraska. Owing to circumstances which, in early boyhood brought him under the influence of his Episcopal grandfather, he had never practised the religion of his birth, so his was not strictly a conversion but a reconciliation to the faith.

The story of his reconciliation is told by Father Blanchet in his "Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon," published in 1878. It is as follows:

"It is but just to make special mention of the important services which Dr. McLoughlin, though not a Catholic, has rendered to the French Canadians and their families during the fourteen years of his governorship at Fort Vancouver.

"Besides the English school kept for the children of the

<sup>1</sup> For details of the injustice and ingratitude of this eviction of Dr. McLoughlin see *The Catholic Church in Oregon*, by Edwin V. O'Hara.

bourgeois class he maintained a separate one at his own expense. By his orders, prayers and catechism were taught in French to the Catholic women and children. He also encouraged the singing of hymns in which he was assisted by his wife and daughter, who took pleasure in this exercise. He visited and examined the pupils once a week. Several of them soon learned to read French and became a great help to the priests.

"He it was who preserved the Catholics at the fort from the danger of perversion. Finding the log church built by the Canadians in 1836 not properly located, he ordered it to be rebuilt on a large and beautiful prairie.

"To that excellent man was our holy religion indebted for whatever morality the missionaries found in Vancouver, as well as for the welfare and advantages enjoyed by the settlers in Cowlitz and the Willamette Valley.

"The good work of that excellent man deserved reward. He received it by being brought to the true Church in the following manner: One day, at Nisqually, Dr. Milner's book entitled, 'The End of Controversy' fell into his hands. He read it with avidity, and was at once overcome and converted. On his return to Vancouver he made his abjuration and profession of faith in the hands of the Vicar-General. On the same day he made his confession and had his marriage blessed. He prepared for his First Communion on his claim at the Willamette Falls, where he fasted during the four weeks of advent. Thus prepared he made his First Communion in Fort Vancouver, at Midnight Mass, 1843. A large number of the faithful women and servants of the Company received at the same time. The beautifully decorated and illuminated chapel, the plain chant, the French and Chinook hymns, the solemn functions at the altar, made the commemoration of the birth of Our Saviour as impressive as could be.

"It was at the celebration of the Midnight Mass that the Honorable Peter H. Burnett, who was present as a mere spectator, received the first impressions of our holy faith which soon led to his conversion. He mentioned this in the preface

of his book, 'The Path which led a Protestant Lawyer to the Catholic Church.' "

Mr. P. H. Burnett, who filled the difficult position of first governor of California, was a prominent pioneer of Oregon. Before his conversion he had, from being a Baptist passed through the mists of Campbellism; Grace came to him through the holy Sacrifice of Midnight Mass.

From the time of his reception into the Church Dr. John McLoughlin showed himself a true, practical Catholic, and a worthy member of the creed he professed. He never missed Mass or Vespers on Sundays, and was a monthly communicant.

On his way to church on Sundays he was often accompanied by his non-Catholic friends. On a certain day, one of them invited him to come and assist at the service in his church. "No, sir," he answered, "I go to the Church which teaches truth, not error."

He was all along so great a benefactor to the Church that when Father Blanchet, after his consecration as bishop of Oregon, had an audience with His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI, in 1847, he mentioned the illustrious convert's services, upon which our Holy Father sent him the insignia of the distinguished Order of St. Gregory. He was the first person on the Pacific coast to be so honored.

To the appreciation of this grand personage we subjoin that of Mr. Holman, another enthusiastic biographer. "The Catholics of the Pacific Northwest may claim as their own the 'Father of Oregon.' They have a hero that is found without blemish. You may search the world over, and all its histories from the beginning of civilization till today, and you will find no nobler, no greater man than Dr. McLoughlin. His life and character illustrate the kinship of man to God. He was God-like in his great fatherhood, in his great strength, in his great power; he was Christlike in his gentleness, his tenderness and in his humanity.

"The grievance of the Hudson's Bay Company against him was that not being able to stop immigration, except by letting the Indians massacre the incomers, he rendered them every



assistance—thus crossing the intentions of the Company who wished to hold the country for its rich fur profits.”

Dr. McLoughlin himself sums up the results of his labors in Oregon: “I founded the settlements in the country and prevented a war between the United States and Great Britain. For doing this peaceably and quietly, I was treated by the British in such a manner that from self-respect I resigned my position in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s service, by which I sacrificed twelve thousand per annum. The Oregon Land Bill shows the treatment I received from the Americans.”

For better, for worse, had the representations made to the directors of the Company in London, by Dr. John McLoughlin and Sir George Simpson, undoubtedly the two greatest men in the history of the Hudson’s Bay Company, been heeded, the Union Jack might now be floating over the coast from Mexico to Alaska inclusive, and even in Hawaii. The British had control over these parts, and were operating there with absolute sway. California and Alaska could have been purchased some years before their worth was realized by the United States. But Britain failing to see the value of countries in which the fur trade was dwindling, let the opportunity pass. Even Oregon on which she had such a hold slipped from her, and in time was divided into three American States.

When the United States began to realize the wonderful possibilities of the Oregon district, they wanted more territory, and the cry was raised, “Fifty-four forty or fight!” They claimed all the country below that parallel. Too late now for England to make good her prior advantages. She averted fighting, perhaps war, by relinquishing rights—assumed or just—to the regions south of the 49th parallel, an adjustment which proved satisfactory to all concerned.

But an era of progress was being inaugurated by the influx of immigrants. Our missionaries after their struggle against paganism now had to enter into a period of organization. Their exhausting travels and tedious teaching of the Indians were somewhat restricted, but their labors were not lessened. Now

their appeal was to be not only to the Indians but to the new white settlers who had come into the country.

In March, 1844, Father Demers was made pastor of Oregon City. The City numbered some sixty houses. That very summer the territory known as Oregon was detached from the jurisdiction of Quebec, and made a Vicariate Apostolic. Father Blanchet was elected its bishop. He was consecrated in Montreal, July 25, 1845, and immediately left for Europe. Before leaving he appointed Father Demers administrator of his diocese. This nomination put an end to the plans of the latter for a second tour in New Caledonia. Father Nobili, a Jesuit, went in his stead.

It is, indeed, pitiful that having zeal, self-denial and all priestly virtues to give to the missionary apostolate, one may yet be a failure. The supernatural is reached through the natural. Personality, will-power, fearlessness, each have effect in winning the natives to Christ, and, notwithstanding his piety and good intention, Father Nobili did not possess these assets. He was timid and over-cautious in traveling. Such weakness, though pardonable, was not lost on the natives, but it was a loss to his ministry. What a compound a successful missionary must be!

As the long vexatious dispute between Britain and the United States relative to the possession of the Oregon Territory was being debated in Parliament and in Congress, the Hudson's Bay authorities in the country, anticipating that England would have to recede, began to consider moving the fur depot from Fort Vancouver to a more secure northern region.

As early as 1837 the advantages of Vancouver Island had been noted as most suitable. Its southern harbor, the best north of California, its fertile soil, fine timber and temperate climate appealed to the exploring party as strong arguments for forming there, through the transfer of the fort, the nucleus of a city.

An expedition of twenty-two men under Chief Factor Douglas left Vancouver March 1, 1843, to inspect the island. On their way they stopped at Cowlitz for provisions. The chief factor was a religious man and free from prejudice, so he in-

vited Father Bolduc, who was stationed there attending to the settlers and neighboring Indians, to go with him as a guest. Father Bolduc having obtained the permission of the Vicar-General gladly availed himself of an offer which opened the way to the spread of the faith.

The caravan on horseback, with a number of pack horses, reached Nisqually, Puget Sound, March 7th. On the 13th they embarked on the steamer *Beaver* which was at anchor waiting for them. The *Beaver* stands out conspicuously not only as the first steamship which navigated on the Pacific Ocean, but for the glorious career it had, till aged and worn out it collapsed in the harbor at Vancouver, B. C. The ship sailed from Nisqually on the morning of the 14th, and anchored for the night in a bay off Whidby Island. The voyage was resumed next morning and made a stop at Port Angeles. At four in the afternoon of March 15th the travelers were on the southern shore of Vancouver Island.

The native Songhees crowded around the party, and eyed with curiosity the landing of spades, axes, picks and tool-chests, etc., for the men had come prepared to begin a fort at once. While the men were investigating, choosing a site and locating timber, Father Bolduc, intent on spiritual concerns, prepared an altar for the celebration of Holy Mass—the first said in the city of Victoria.<sup>1</sup> This solemn event which marks the taking possession of the Island of Vancouver through the sacrifice of divine

Adoration,

Thanksgiving,

Propitiation,

Petition

took place on Sunday, March 19th, feast of the glorious St. Joseph.

<sup>1</sup> The first Christian service held in any portion of British Columbia was the Mass celebrated by the Franciscan Fathers, Don Jose Lopez di Nava and Don Jose Maria Diaz, at Nootka Sound, on Wednesday, June 24, 1789. In 1774, Fathers Crespi and Pena had been with the first Spaniards to sail along the west coast of the island. Though they held services within sight of our shores yet they were never actually upon any portion of the province. *British Columbia*, F. W. Howay and E. O. S. Scholefield.

As our narrative is soon to center on this island, especially in Victoria, which rose from the Hudson's Bay fort, and is the last port of sail from Canada to the Orient, every detail bearing on this inaugural Mass is of surpassing interest. Fortunately Father Bolduc has left us a minute account of it:

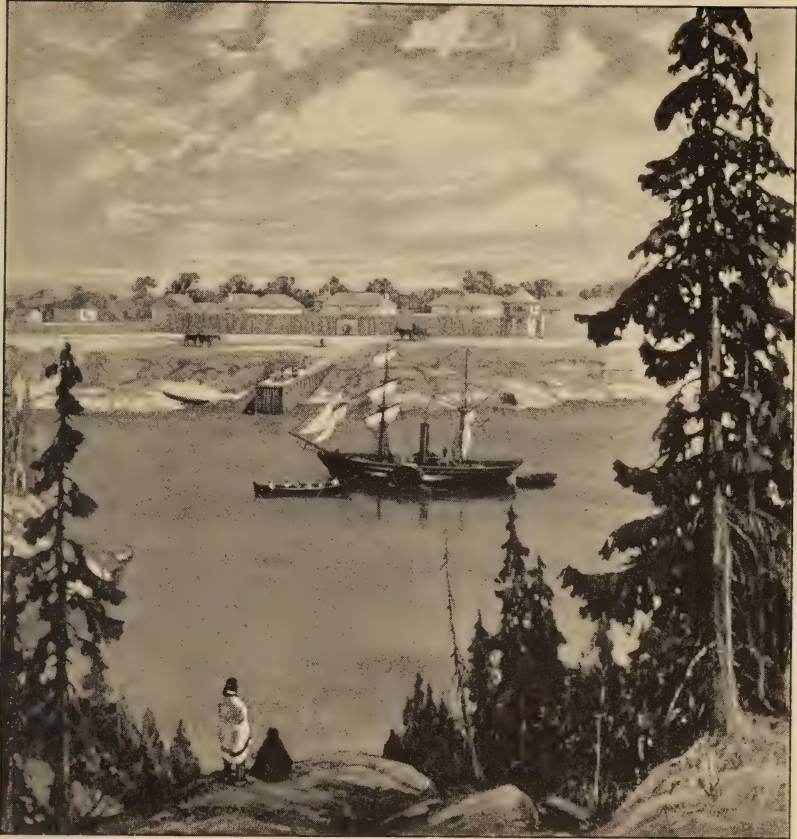
"It was about four P. M. when we announced our arrival by firing off our cannon a couple of times. The natives came out of their houses and surrounded the steamer. The next day canoes came from all quarters. Seeing that there was no danger, I went on shore with the Commandant, and the Captain, but only after a few days when I felt quite sure of the friendly dispositions of the natives, did I venture to go to their village, situated about six miles from the harbor, at the farther end of a nice little bay—Cadbora, so named after the Hudson's Bay Company's brigantine which entered the Victoria harbor in 1842.

"Upon my arrival in their village, which has a fortification of posts, all the men, women and children, numbering five hundred twenty five, formed a double line to shake hands with me. I assembled them in the chief's lodge, because it was the largest. Through an interpreter I spoke to them of God, the Creator of all things, who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. My instructions were repeatedly interrupted by remarks, and even by speeches made by my auditors. The news of my arrival caused several tribes to come to see me.

"March 18th being a Saturday, I spent the day preparing a rustic chapel in which to have Holy Mass and Sunday functions. The sides were of fir tree branches, and an awning from one of the boats served as a canopy. Our host, the Chief Factor, gave me several of his men to help, and left nothing undone that could make the ceremony imposing. I was welcome to bring ashore anything that might contribute to devotion. The Chief Factor was present at the Mass, as well as several Canadians, including two Catholic ladies.

"I had set that day apart for the baptism of children, so I went to the principal village accompanied by a French Canadian called Gobin, and all the people who had been at Mass.





*By Courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company*

FORT VICTORIA—1843



Upon my arrival I had to shake hands with another crowd of six hundred persons. The children were lined up in two rows on the beach. I gave them each a name on a slip of paper, and began the ceremony. Upon counting the number I found there were one hundred two new Christians."

Father Bolduc in forwarding this report to his ecclesiastical superior begged to be allowed "to return and place the mission on a permanent basis."

Alas that then, as now, the laborers were too few for the harvest! The ardent missionary could not so much as prolong his stay with the expedition. He bought a large canoe, and crossing the Sound in two days, reached Whidby on the 25th. He pitched his tent near the cross which had been erected in 1840. The tribes received him with open arms and built him a house twenty-eight feet by twenty-five feet, to be used by the missionaries. He stayed with them eight days, instructing and baptizing.

A great joy awaited him on his return to St. Paul's. It was the meeting with Father Demers, who six days before had arrived from his great trip to New Caledonia. What an outpouring of home news followed! What a transport of happiness for the affectionate heart of Father Demers who had not seen anyone from his dear Canada for five years! He who had written to his Alma Mater, "Everything that I left on the other side of the Rocky Mountains is still quite fresh in my memory. I hear you say, 'That is rather sad!' Now, now, no reproaches, please. But pardon this poor heart of mine which takes so much pleasure in finding itself in Canada."

About the same time he wrote to his relatives, "Prayer, much prayer, is needed to sustain one in missions such as New Caledonia. Its great isolation makes even you shudder as you sit comfortably in the homestead. Were I not afraid of scandalizing you I would tell you with what courage, or rather with what daring I cast my lot in these arduous missions. One must have had personal experience to know the graces God has in store for poor missionaries.

"I had proof of this divine favor during my recent mission

to that remote region. One is never more at ease than when reduced to depend solely on Providence. You can have no idea of the contentment and consolation which I then enjoyed."

Yes, Father Demers, saintly missionary, we know that God never lets Himself be outdone in generosity.

The author of a sketch of his life, lost in admiration over such sublime sentiments, breaks forth as follows: "What exalted and serene philosophy! What suavity of soul, and placidity of heart! There is in all the actions of this great missionary I know not what of supernatural, of mysterious grace penetrating his being, and holding it under its absolute sway. Already the veil of futurity is lifted and we catch a glimpse of the high dignity to which Rome will raise him. Not that he has any idea of it. His sole object is to have everything ready in the moral and temporal order for his superior, Father Blanchet, who has received the Bulls making him the first bishop of the Pacific Coast region."

While the bishop elect was east preparing for episcopal consecration, Father Demers with apostolic and progressive energy was building churches. He had four under construction at the same time—one in Oregon City, another in Vancouver, a third in Willamette and the fourth in Grand Prairie.

Evidently he was much pleased with the church in Oregon City, and with reason; it measured sixty feet by thirty, and rested on a six foot foundation. The lateral chapels, windows and cornices were all in Gothic style. He wrote, "It is an ornament to our new city, and, we hope, worthy of being accepted by our Bishop for his Cathedral. At the same time I built a small house for myself, for up to the present I have occupied one which did not belong to me, and for which I paid ten dollars a month rent."

He multiplied himself directing and using the tools of the workmen in the erection of these churches, which were far apart, for we must remember he did not have a Ford to go from one place to another.

The noble missionary's confidence in Divine Providence was unlimited. It had to be, for otherwise he could not have



continued these enterprises with an empty purse. "Columbia—a name which implied more than Oregon—Columbia," says Bishop Blanchet, "owes almost all its churches to Father Demers. I have seen him at work again, and again, with unsurpassed zeal, when he had not a penny with which to meet his expenses. When he was asked how he could expect to meet them, he answered, 'I am working for the glory of God. He will see to the payments.' God never failed him."

"A man of courage is full of faith."—CICERO.

Father Demers was most apt in all kinds of manual labor and handicraft. In fact, this was a family inheritance. The building of a church did not simply mean for him to draw a contract; no, he was leader in all the labor it involved; he was architect, carpenter, mason, blacksmith. He was also skilled as silver-smith, clock-repairer and bookbinder. His dexterity and resourcefulness astonished those who saw him at work. The Indians, especially, considered him the heir to the genius of the Great Master. And with their aptitude for fit terms, they called him, "The beloved of the Spirit from above."

But the list of his abilities is not ended. Father Demers was also a surveyor. To see him draw plans and lay lines one would have thought he had spent years in the study of civil engineering.

In all he did he was expeditious but thoughtful. Among the numerous souvenirs that he distributed among the Indians were crucifixes which he made with his own hands. There was a breviary which he had beautifully bound for Reverend Benjamin Desrocher; also a dictionary, much prized by Mr. Bernard during his studies for the priesthood.

To a person who was expressing amazement at his varied skill, Father Demers said, "My dear friend, nothing is impossible to the man who places his trust in God. As for myself when something seems necessary and I meet almost insurmountable difficulties in its furtherance I say with confidence 'My God, do this yourself,' and at once the thing becomes easy."

True, but as Hamlet says,

"Aye, there's the rub."

This absolute confidence in God—Our Blessed Lord says,

If you have faith as a grain  
of mustard seed,  
you shall say to this mountain  
Remove from hence thither,  
and it shall remove;  
And nothing shall be impossible to you.

Father Demers' faith was of that kind; it could have removed mountains if such had been necessary for the glory of God. To his varied aptitude and marvelous faith, he united a wonderful facility for acquiring the most difficult Indian idioms. All these qualifications set in a frame of noble bearing, and brought into relief by courtesy and kindness of manner, offers us the picture of a chosen soul, a superior intelligence and a fit instrument expressly fashioned by God to fill the great mission to which He called him.

Besides the churches and adjacent residences for the priest mentioned before, Father Demers undertook the building of another church and an episcopal residence to have all in readiness for the reception of Bishop Blanchet. Labor and material were very high and working men at a premium. It required more than ordinary courage to carry so many simultaneous projects to good issue. However, the merry character and good humor of which he possessed such a rich fund, always stood by him. He who had none of this world's goods could say pleasantly in the midst of his worries and perplexities, "Bishop Blanchet will have to bring a fat purse to keep him from bankruptcy."

Meanwhile, his courage almost sank under a far different kind of trial from that of money. He saw the trial coming and dreaded it, but he was not prepared for so sudden an attack. The missionaries of other denominations were affected like himself, and for a while all his labor and the fruit of so much devotedness ran risks they had not yet encountered.

Two men—through respect for their nationality we omit their names—began to make whiskey. The poison of intemperance at once began its detrimental influence on the French-Canadians and half-breeds. If the infamous sale had reached the Indians all would have been lost. Father Demers supplicated, thundered, did all in his power to end the scourge. His helpers, Father Bolduc and a Jesuit Father, did as much on their side; the latter especially preached to the delinquents with such force as to terrify the demons themselves.

But what hurt Father Demers most—and in this, he gives another proof of being one in spirit with his superior officer, Bishop Blanchet—was the sorrow with which the bishop would be filled on his return on seeing this sad state of affairs. And by this time, he began to feel that unless his protests availed, he would not be near to drink the chalice with his Superior.

The liquor producers would not have been so bold in their traffic had the Hudson's Bay Company exerted its long established guard against the spread of liquor. As an instance of the preventive means formerly taken in Oregon we have the following instance: A brig had arrived in the port of Vancouver with a large quantity of rum on board. Dr. McLoughlin hearing of this bought the cargo and stored it away that it might not be sold in the country. His object was to prevent the use of rum, and to sustain the cause of temperance.

While the primary motive throughout the fur land in controlling the sale of intoxicating drinks, and diluting them with a certain percentage of water, was in the interests of the trade, it helped to maintain order. So far as the Columbia district where the use of liquor was reduced to a minimum was concerned, few communities were as steady and prosperous.

But when the Hudson's Bay Company began to move its fort from Vancouver to Victoria discipline was weakened and distillers began their trade. For a while, all the sermons produced little effect, but fortunately, the civic authorities, spurred on by the representations of the missionaries, began to make drastic laws. They forbade the introduction and the making of

spirituous liquor, and neglected nothing to insure the observance of the law. The situation was saved.

But still another trial is on the way for what appalling news is this, that, like the rumble of distant thunder, reaches Father Demers? Some one writes to him from the east, "It is said here that you are to be bishop of one of the Sees to be created out of the Oregon territory."

"Impossible," says the humble recipient at this first intimation of the rumor. All the same, it was soon made possible by papal authority. Not unlike the Cyrenean who, on coming unthinkingly from the rough field of midday labor, was forced into helping Christ carry His cross, did Father Demers have to bend his shoulders to the bitter burden and ascend the hill of Calvary.

Dr. John McLoughlin went up the royal road through the temporal trials of a lay Christian; Father Demers, through the spiritual ones of the anointed of the Lord.



---

## CHAPTER XIII

---

### ARCHBISHOP F. N. BLANCHET

**P**IONEERS are truly the survival of the fittest; the unfit lose heart and turn their backs to the plow. The pioneers who turn the glebe for the sowing of the Gospel seed, who stand in the highest rank of the makers of a country, of a city, of church steeples, are the missionaries. Sharing all the difficulties and problems of lay settlers, they have in pagan countries, moreover, to cope with the powers of darkness. Those who have the fortitude to stand the dual combat to the end are justly honored as heroes of the Catholic Church.

We have learned enough of the apostolic labors of Reverend Fathers F. N. Blanchet and of Modeste Demers in opening up the Pacific Coast to Catholicity to place them in that noble category, and to rejoice that the former was made metropolitan of the three Sees created out of the vast territory evangelized by him, and that his equally great confrère was appointed to the suffragan See of Vancouver Island.

Archbishop Blanchet was a Canadian, born September 3rd, 1795, in the parish of St. Pierre, Rivière du Sud, Lower Canada. The family pedigree gives the names of fifteen priests and fifteen nuns, besides a number of members distinguished in public life. As a student Francis Norbert carried off prizes in Latin Composition. His love of study continued throughout his whole life. A visitor who called upon him one day in his humble missionary lodgings was surprised to find there a library of five hundred Greek and Latin classics.

He was ordained July 19th, 1819. His first appointment in the priestly ministry was one which served as an initiation to the missionary career awaiting him. Because he was a bilingual he was asked to take charge of the old mission of Richibucto, New Brunswick, for the benefit of the French Canadian ele-

ment there. The mission was a roadless wilderness, with stations scattered over two hundred and twenty-five miles. He went the rounds twice a year; in summer he did so in birch-bark canoes and in piroques—log canoes used for stretches across arms of the sea. In winter he traveled over snow, five and six feet deep, on snowshoes, in thirty below zero weather. His zeal and cheerfulness were always equal to the occasion.

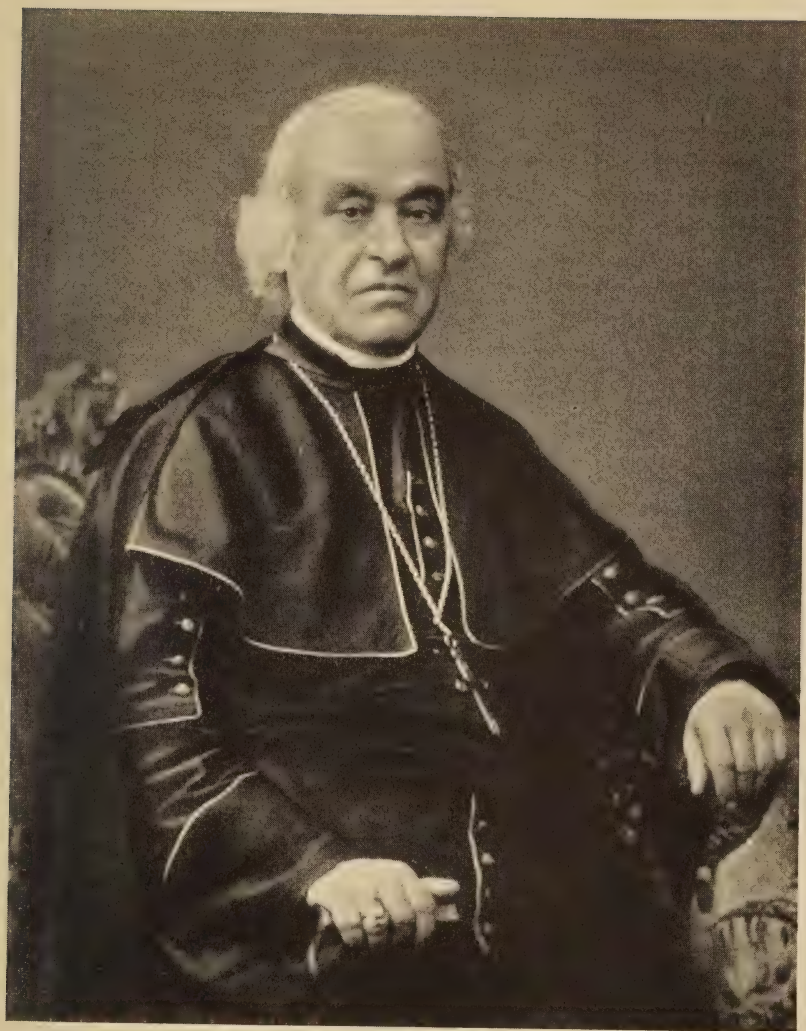
In 1827, he entered on a second initiation preparatory to the western apostolate for which Providence destined him. He was made pastor of the Cedars, a Montreal parish on the St. Lawrence River. Here he had much intercourse with the fur traders and voyageurs from the Up Country.

To complete his preparation for the tremendous work of his life, he had the sad experience of seeing his flock visited by the cholera plague of 1832. He spent himself caring for the stricken with such heroic charity that the non-Catholics of the district gave him two silver cups in appreciation of his visitations of their sick and dying.

Equipped with experience, charity and energy, he was a splendid instrument to inaugurate Catholicity in the West. Through his "Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon," we have followed him across Canada, and have seen the first six years of his united labor, with Father Demers, culminate in his being named first bishop of Oregon. With the reception of his Bulls came the perplexing question of where to go, with the least waste of time, to receive episcopal consecration. The nearest bishop was in Mexico.

Bishop-Elect Blanchet decided to go there. He left Fort Vancouver December 5, 1844. On arriving in Mexico he presented his credentials and the document of his appointment by Rome. There was no questioning their authenticity. But who was he? There was no one to identify him as the rightful bearer of the Bulls. The bishop of Mexico could not consecrate an utter stranger.

The *Columbia* on which the bishop-elect had taken passage from Vancouver was going to Honolulu. There was nothing for him to do but to go with her and, when she returned



MOST REVEREND FRANCIS NORBERT BLANCHET

First Vicar-Apostolic of Oregon—1843  
Named Archbishop of Oregon City—1846





around Cape Horn, sail with her to France. Much valuable time and expense would have been saved if he could have been consecrated in France, but here, as in Mexico, he was unknown. He recrossed the Atlantic to Montreal. At last he was among friends and acquaintances. Among a concourse of the faithful in his home diocese he was consecrated, July 25, 1845, a year and seven months from the time he had left for Mexico—to save time.

After the bishop's consecration he returned to Europe for the purpose of recruiting priests for his new diocese, also of collecting funds and of consulting the Vatican about the division of his episcopal territory into bishoprics. During his sojourn in the Eternal City he met many eminent churchmen. They made all sorts of enquiries about the territory that he was endeavoring to Christianize. Learning of its rapid development through immigration, they entered into his views and suggested that he ask the Holy See to have it erected into an ecclesiastical province.

Seeing the advisability of this action, the prelate addressed a memorial to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda. In this statement he sets forth with clarity and with lofty vision the geographical position and importance of Oregon, or Columbia, the date and circumstances of its discovery, its establishment by Canadians and Americans, its maritime and land expeditions, and the beginning of its colonization by the British and Americans.

Next he passes to the introduction of Catholicity, and stresses the wonderful influence of the bishops of Quebec. He also sets forth the evangelization of the two Californias. He mentions the religious state in which the missionaries found the country, their success, the difficulties and dangers they encountered in their visitations of a country nearly as large as Europe, the results of their efforts during six years, results altogether out of proportion to their means, for they amount to six thousand converted heathens, fourteen chapels and missions, one thousand Canadians withdrawn from imminent peril to their Faith, two educational institutions established, and

the frustration of attempts made to pervert souls, and menacing perils conjured.

In conclusion, the bishop proposes as a fundamental organization for various establishments, that the Vicariate Apostolic be subdivided into eight dioceses. The Holy See limited the number to three with the understanding that more dioceses would be formed as greater necessity arose.

The districts of Oregon City and Nisqually were confided to Archbishop Blanchet with the title of Metropolitan and Archbishop of all Oregon. Bishop Magloire Blanchet, his brother, who had been consecrated in Montreal in September, 1846, received the district of Walla Walla, Fort Hall and Colville. To Father Demers was assigned New Caledonia, Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Russian possessions in the Arctic.

After the settlement of this portentous matter, the Archbishop went to Austria where he was received by the Emperor, Ferdinand I, and the Empress, and to Bavaria where he met the same courtesy from the King. In Belgium, the King and Queen extended to the missionary the honor of the great to the great; like King Louis Philippe of France, by whom he was received several times, they offered the use of the railways of their country to the distinguished Apostle of Oregon and his companions and gave him gifts worthy of their station.

Archbishop Blanchet was also successful in securing co-laborers, since he returned with a band of twenty-one—three Jesuit Fathers and three brothers of the same society; five secular priests; two deacons; seven Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, and Mr. Mesplie, a clerical student to whom, after his ordination, was paid the compliment that the mantle of Father de Smet had fallen upon him. Another highly estimable member of the party was Reverend B. Delorme, who became Vicar General of Oregon.

The company sailed from Brest. At Rio de Janeiro they encountered a storm that sent the ship a hundred miles out of her course. After rounding Cape Horn she faced another tempest that lasted eight days. All's well that ends well. On August

25, 1847, the Archbishop vested in episcopal robes made his solemn entry into his cathedral in Oregon City.

Having noted church progress in the arch-diocese of Oregon, we shall turn to the diocese of Vancouver Island, but before taking leave of the territory of Columbia, where we have had such inspiring revelations of missionary courage, we shall skip time to the year 1881. It is the occasion of the aged Archbishop F. N. Blanchet's farewell to his flock. He is now in his eighty-sixth year. He has passed his pastoral staff to younger hands, he mounts the pulpit which has so often vibrated with the doctrine of Christ to address his beloved congregation for the last time before retiring into solitude to prepare for the final summons. His farewell words, like his actions, should be a golden page of Church history. An eyewitness describes the scene:

"The aged prelate approached the altar with tottering steps. His lips falter, but he speaks with the dignity of an apostle. 'After sixty-two years in the priesthood; after forty-three years of toilsome labor on this coast; after an episcopate of thirty-six years; after thirty-five years spent at the head of this ecclesiastical province, we may say with the Apostle St. Paul, "The time of my dissolution is at hand. I have finished my course." And with holy Simeon, "Let, therefore, the Lord dismiss His servant in peace, for truly my eyes have seen the wonderful works of His salvation."

" 'We came to this country in 1838, accompanied by the late Modeste Demers, first Bishop of Vancouver Island, to preach the true Gospel for the first time, where we saw nothing but "darkness and the shadow of death"; we have now flourishing dioceses and vicariates; prosperous missions and a zealous clergy; fervent communities and a Catholic people of whom we can expect great work and noble deeds.

" 'At the age of eighty-six we feel we are growing old, "like a garment" and that our generation being at an end, our time has arrived to retire into a place of rest and solitude in order to recount to God all our years in the bitterness of our soul.

" 'Farewell, then, beloved and reverend brethren of the

priesthood who have so often been our consolation. Farewell, beloved daughters, Christian virgins, Spouses of Jesus Christ, who so often edified and rejoiced us with the perfume of your virtues. Farewell, beloved children of the laity who have been so long the object of our concern and prayerful solicitude. Farewell, young men in whom we behold with pleasure the future of the Catholic Church. Farewell, little children, the beloved of Jesus Christ and the cherished ones of our heart. We part now, but we have the firm hope of seeing you forever in heaven.

“‘Forget not your old and loving spiritual father; forgive him his mistakes and shortcomings; pray for him that his sins may be forgiven and forgotten when he will be called to give an account of his stewardship.’”

We, adown the years, may imagine St. John, the apostle of love, speaking in this tender strain to the Christians of Edessa.

On the occasion, the *Portland Sentinel* had the following editorial:

“Forty-one years have now elapsed since the memorable third of May, 1838, when Archbishop Blanchet set out from Montreal as the Vicar General of the entire Northwest Coast. Oregon and its adjacent region was then almost unknown, except as a wilderness in the Far West. Now the noble missionary carries with him into his retirement the love, respect and veneration not only of the Catholics, but also of the majority of the entire people of the North-West Coast. But Catholics revere him in particular because he has preserved unsullied from spot or wrinkle the seamless garb of his high and holy apostolate.

“Throughout his long and eventful life not a shadow has passed across the mirror-like surface of his ecclesiastical character. Through heat and cold, through hunger and sickness, he labored almost alone in order to plant the mustard seed of faith in every region of the North-West. And in later years he has had the happiness to see the tiny seeds he planted with his own consecrated hands, spring up and spread out like a great tree whose branches extend from California to Alaska,



from the Rocky Mountains to the shore line of the Pacific. And how has the venerable prelate been preserved to witness the glorious works which have sprung up under his supervision! Listen, Catholic reader, as His Grace tells you in his own words the secret of his success:

“It was on Saturday, the 13th of October, 1838, a day dedicated to the Immaculate Mother of God, that being at the western foot of the most lofty mountains, the two missionaries began to tread beneath their feet the long-desired land of Oregon, that portion of the vineyard allotted them for cultivation. Filled with joy they retired to a short distance from where the caravan was resting on the bosom of a beautiful prairie, and there fell on their knees, embraced the soil, took possession of it, dedicated and consecrated their persons, soul and body to whatever God would be pleased to require of them for the glory of His name, the propagation of His Kingdom and the fulfilment of His Will.’

“Here is the key that unlocks the hidden treasures of heaven. Our venerable Prelate and his companion, the saintly Bishop Demers, consecrated themselves soul and body to whatever God would be pleased to require of them for the glory of His Name.

“The ways of Providence are inscrutable. Two missionaries are sent forth from the region of Canada to carry the Cross to the far distant West, and to labor among tribes of Indians whose names, habits, numbers and location were even then unknown. For years they prosecuted their labors; immigrants follow the Cross of the missionaries over the long pathway which then lay between civilization and chaos.

“New missionaries arrive; a new See is needed, and Francis Norbert Blanchet is elevated to the Episcopate. And now Archbishop Charles J. Seghers comes from the See of Vancouver Island to assist the aged and illustrious pioneer Prelate, who first consecrated the soil of Oregon to the service of Almighty God.”

Very Reverend Charles John Seghers, his panegyrist, might well exclaim, “Do you realize it, beloved brethren, he is the apostle of this coast, the foundation of its missions, the corner-

stone of this church. Do you know that a time will come when the name of Archbishop Blanchet will be coupled with Las Casas, the first missionary of Central America; with Marquette and Breboeuf the pioneers of the Cross in Canada and the Atlantic States. Why? Because he was the first missionary apostle of Oregon. He is to Oregon what St. Boniface was to Germany, St. Augustine to England, St. Patrick to Ireland.

"Believe me, our children will envy us the blessing of having seen him, conversed with him, of having listened to his voice."

Years before in Rome, and shortly after his own episcopal consecration in 1845, Archbishop Blanchet, in his unbounded appreciation and full knowledge of the qualifications of Father Demers, had certainly thrown in the weight of his authority to have his co-laborer nominated for the new diocese of Vancouver Island. Perhaps it was a mark of the Archbishop's exalted estimate of the sterling worth of his friend that he proposed him for the most difficult diocese in North America.

When rumors of this appointment became more and more pronounced, Father Demers was filled with the greatest consternation. It was not possible, said he, that the Vicar General, with whom he had labored one in soul for six years, should have mentioned his name in connection with the episcopacy.

He wrote to Reverend C. F. Gazeau of Quebec, who had much to do with the Oregon mission, and who had written to him while the ecclesiastical partition of the territory was in progress saying that he would be one of the suffragan bishops. "Much as it would cost me to give up my cherished missionary work, to which I have consecrated my whole being, I would, in the event of this talk being confirmed, leave at once for Canada. I would be too unfit a bishop to carry on, and the efforts for the conversion of pagans would be paralyzed." He concludes this pitiful letter with the request that if this, the greatest of calamities were to fall upon him, that he be given, instead, the poorest parish in Canada. The cry wrings out from his heart, "How wretched I am, I do not wish to accept, and

yet how can I leave the Archbishop in the lurch?" Again he writes, "Rome in making me a bishop cuts off my feet."

The answer to these arguments, an answer which the humble bishop-elect thought incontestable, was that he received the Bulls appointing him Bishop of Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands and Russian America. He wrote broken-heartedly to Archbishop Blanchet, "You, my friend, how could you have done this to me?"

In profound misery of soul he cast himself at the feet of Reverend Father Scolti, Superior of the Jesuits in Columbia. He implored him to intercede for him, and to suggest means of extricating himself from this tremendous elevation.

The venerable and learned Jesuit said, "My dear Father Demers, be comforted; we shall make a novena together, and God will make known what should be done."

At the end of the novena, the enlightened Jesuit spoke in these terms to him for whom the words held such import. "My dear friend in Jesus Christ, did you hear a voice from heaven? I did, and this is its message to you. God often hides His admirable designs, and one of His ordinary means of making them known, in whole or in part, is the voice of our superiors. In this present case, it is the voice of the Bishops of Canada, and of him whom Providence has placed at the head of this vast territory, which has spoken and the Holy See has approved. It is, therefore, the proper time to lend an ear to the teachings of the Faith within you. In the midst of the tempest which has surged in your soul you will hear the eloquent voice which will dispel your unrest. Rome has spoken. The cause is decided.

"Yes, you must submit. Providence will do the rest. You have the gift of tongues. Evidently God wishes to bind you irrevocably to the poor Indians you love so much. At any rate the episcopacy cannot be a hindrance to you."

The wisdom in these words was the answer to prayer. Was there equal fortitude given him to whom they were addressed? The main result was that they were received with entire sub-

mission, though the humble apostle retired from the interview shedding an abundance of tears and uttering from the bottom of his heart, "Paratum cor meum, paratum cor meum, my heart is ready for the sacrifice, but the sight of my weakness and miseries overpowers me. In thy infinite mercy, My God, have pity on your poor servant."

The new bishop elect entered on a forty days' retreat. All in vain had been his remonstrances, his pleadings. The day of his consecration was fixed for November 30, 1847.

The awful combat which he had to sustain against himself, in the alternative of giving up his missionary vocation to which he clung with every fiber of his nature, or of accepting the mitre from which he shrank so piteously, is perhaps the most edifying page of his history.

We shall close this part of Father Demers' life with a paragraph from a letter to the seminary with which he kept up correspondence. It is the last joyous expansion, the last delightful note of intimacy which his pen will ever write.

"I have been in Columbia eight years. How many more are left me, I do not know, but this I do know that here the years pass like days. One can become old while still thinking himself young; this is not without its advantages. It seems to me I only arrived yesterday. I am among you at the seminary, enjoying your companionship, taking part in your conversations; I can even hear you laugh at the stories which I rattle off to you."

Henceforth, the buoyant missionary is to be weighed down by the burden of the episcopate. There was, indeed, reason for gravity. He was given for a second time the task of beginning a new work, of laying the corner stone to an edifice which awaited the direction of a vigorous arm to rise on the ocean strand of Vancouver Island. Everything was wanting: evangelical workers, material means. There was everything to do; everything to bring forth from nothing. Father Demers needed all his confidence in divine protection, all his faith in that beneficent Providence that takes pleasure in confounding



human pride by making use of men, whose weakness as His poor instruments serves to bring out in bolder relief, the help which comes from on high. How many times Father Demers had already experienced it as so natural an outcome, that the supernatural had become ordinary.

In choosing the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle for the day of his consecration, Father Demers said that he wished to put his new apostolate under the protection of this great lover of the Cross, and that if he were not like him to shed his blood for His Divine Master, he might at least, after his example and with his help, embrace with joy and suffer with patience the tribulations strewn along his path.

The ceremony of episcopal consecration took place in the modest church of Oregon City which, by the appointment of Archbishop F. N. Blanchet as metropolitan of the new diocese, was raised to the dignity of Cathedral. The Archbishop was the consecrator. Everyone, whites, half-breeds and Indians assisted at the ceremony. The French-Canadians, particularly, were there in large numbers, very gratified that three of their nationality were the first bishops on the Pacific Coast, for Rt. Rev. Augustin Magloire Blanchet, the Archbishop's brother, had been consecrated Bishop of Walla Walla in Montreal, September 27, 1846.

If Archbishop Blanchet is called the Apostle of Oregon, and Bishop Modeste Demers the Apostle of British Columbia, Bishop A. M. Blanchet is justly revered as the Apostle of Washington. Like his confrères, Bishop Magloire Blanchet was all zeal for the promotion of religion. He established missions, built churches, opened schools for the Indians, founded academies and colleges, begged for priests in Eastern Canada and abroad and obtained Sisters for hospitals and other institutions. He continued his arduous apostolate thirty-two years; then, broken down by ill-health he resigned his See, and after eight years spent in prayer and suffering, he died peacefully February 25, 1887.

Most Reverend F. N. Blanchet, illustrious apostle of this North-West Pacific, we the

52, 452<sup>1</sup>

Catholics of Oregon come on this blessed centenary of your arrival in this territory, to pay tribute to your memory for the Christianity you planted in this state.

187

priests, faithful to the traditions passed on by your zeal, are here to lay on your monument, their garnered sheaves of wheat—their clusters of grapes.

20

religious orders, consecrated by triple vows, deposit their garlands of crimson, white and gold.

794

Catholic College and University students present their laurels.

8,866

parochial and high school students offer their bunches of violets, daisies and snowdrops.

10

mercy institutions swing their bundles of myrrh like sweet-smelling incense.

146

church steeples ring the anthem of thanksgiving for the plenteous harvest yielded in one hundred years, from the seed sown by your zeal, watered by co-laborers and given increase by Divine Power.

<sup>1</sup> *Official Catholic Directory*, 1938, Statistics for the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon.

---

## CHAPTER XIV

---

### EPISCOPAL BURDEN

#### INTERLUDE

**F**ORLORN, indeed, was Bishop Demers. He had helped to plant the faith in the Columbia Territory; he beheld the progress it had made in nine years, 1838-47. The church was now established on a solid basis. How glorious seemed its future with three bishops, fourteen Jesuits, four Oblates of Mary Immaculate, thirteen secular priests, thirteen nuns, and two houses of education to forward its onward, upward course. And he who had toiled so hard in this construction work, he was sent alone, all alone, to begin in a boundless northern diocese, inhabited by reputedly cruel Indians, the missionary labors he had entered upon with so much courage—hardihood, he calls it—nearly a decade before.

Who better than he can describe what went on before and after his consecration? With a heart bowed down with poignant sorrow, he writes to a priest-friend: "The sad prophecies concerning my future, contained in your correspondence with me, have, alas, been too truly verified. Knowing as I do my inefficiency, my total incapacity, I would never have taken seriously your unlikely previsions, had not Providence, which sometimes produces great results with feeble means, been pleased to overrule my ideas and my projects.

"How bitter was the sorrow I felt in the depths of my soul, when in May, 1847, a letter from the Archbishop of Oregon City, then traveling in Europe for the advantage of his immense Columbia mission, informed me that it had pleased His Holiness, Pius IX, to name me to the new bishopric of Vancouver Island and to lay upon me the charge of two other new dioceses, those of New Caledonia and of Prince Charlotte Islands.

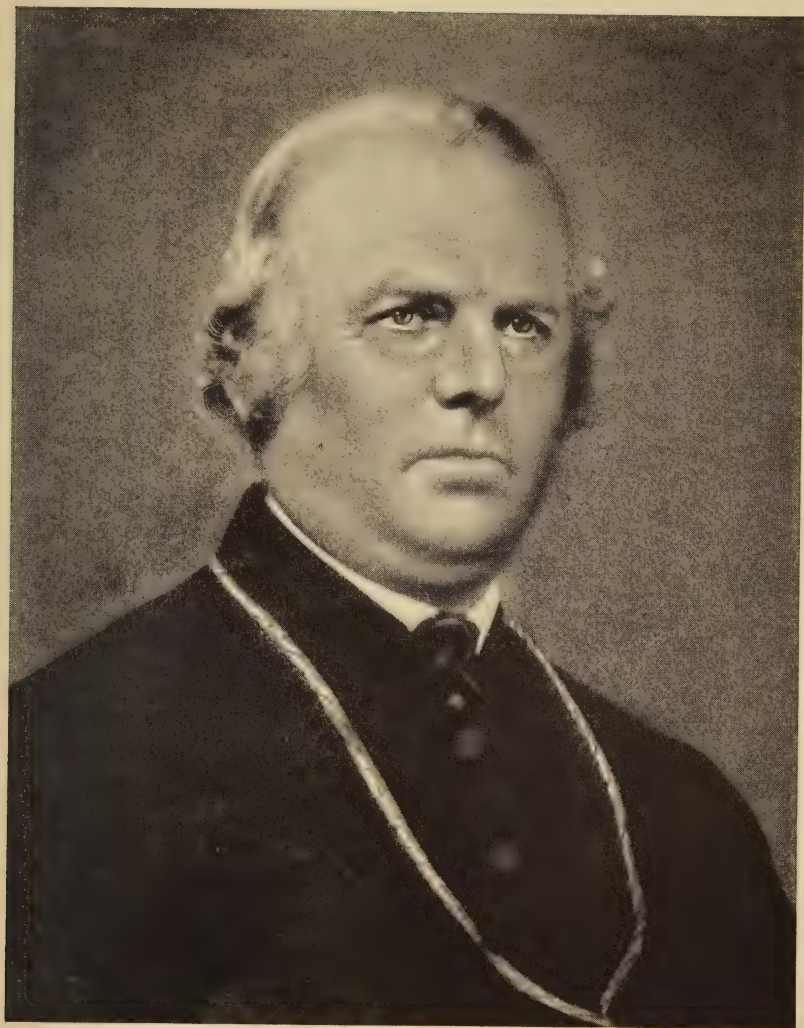
"Before leaving for Europe the Archbishop had not mentioned his projects to me, and it never entered my mind that he was thinking of forming an ecclesiastical province in this country where civilization was just beginning to enter; still less did I think that out of eight dioceses which were to compose it, three were to fall upon my shoulders.

"What means has Providence placed in my hands to build edifices for the glory of Mother Church in these desert and wild countries? Poverty, penury, but without doubt, Divine assistance. It is thus that God shows His power, and confounds our pride. But as for us, His poor instrument, should we not fear to lend to His wonderful works nothing but our feeble, worthless concurrence?

"I kept revolving in my mind the question, should I accept or refuse the heavy burden of the episcopate? Fearful question which I dared not solve! Truth to say, the divine vocation was manifest enough, but, in looking into myself, I found strong reasons to believe that the formidable authority and tremendous obligations of the lofty episcopal dignity, associated with my deficiency, would produce only bad fruit in the Master's field, and would, in all probability, lead to misfortune. Oh, how relieved I would have been to hear a voice from above say to me, go back to the arduous labor of the apostolate in the glacial plains of the Hudson's Bay, or on the banks of the St. Lawrence, to occupy the lowliest place among my dear confrères in Canada. I had, however, to silence these claims of nature, and wait patiently for the return of the Archbishop from Europe, and, crushed under the pressure of a thousand anxious cares, offer on the altar of holy obedience, the devotedness of my whole heart to the Holy Church of Jesus Christ, the repose of my life and of my entire being for the salvation of souls.

"Can I say what emotion stirred my heart and what diverse sentiments besieged it on the day of my consecration. I had but one more step to take, and I would cease to occupy the humble rank of priest in the Church, which I had so ardently desired and to which I considered it a signal favor of our





MOST REVEREND MODESTE DEMERS

Bishop of Victoria—1847-1871



Blessed Lord to have deigned to raise me. A few more moments and I would bend my shoulders to a burden which was altogether too heavy. My friends rejoiced and felicitated me, and I groaned bitterly; I was a prey to overwhelming thoughts, and ineffable anguish.

"A great crowd took part in the touching ceremony. Apart from the natives for whom the spectacle had the charm of novelty, quite a number of Canadians assisted, and, much moved, prayed that heaven would bless their adopted country as He did that of their birth.

"After the singing of the *Te Deum*, I had a sweet consolation which was of a nature to give another trend to my emotions. I administered the sacrament of Confirmation to a venerable old man whom I had instructed and received into the bosom of our Mother, the holy Catholic Church.

"Behold me now in charge of some thirty thousand Indians, the majority of whom are plunged in the darkness of paganism, and I have two co-laborers, who have begun a small establishment in New Caledonia, at the head of Lake Okanagan. From here they go forth over the vast territory which I had the happiness of being the first to visit in 1844, and in which I count about two thousand Christians.

"Vancouver Island, where I am to reside, is three hundred miles long, and eighty miles wide. (It is two hundred and seventy miles long and fifty miles wide as was afterwards found out.) Its southern extremity faces the strait of Juan de Fuca. It is separated from the mainland by the Gulf of Georgia, eighteen miles across. This island has the safest port on the Pacific Coast north of California. The Hudson's Bay Company built a fort here in 1843, called Victoria. The population is composed of ten thousand Indians, all pagan except a few hundred children who were baptized in 1843 by Father Bolduc, the only missionary who has so far visited the country.

"Such is the field which Providence confides to my active service. I must forever leave my first fold in New Caledonia, forever forget the many languages which I learned with so much effort, and lay the first stone in a new edifice. Now is the

time to say workers are needed, material means are needed; may it please the Lord to provide."

The destitute Bishop then states his reasons for going to Canada and Europe, and describes once more the difficult journey to Eastern Canada.

"To go to Canada by the ocean route I would have had to wait till autumn for a ship, which would have occasioned a six months' delay, and I had several motives for hastening my departure. I therefore decided to go overland, and scale again those rocky mountains which I had crossed in the fall of 1838. The great amount of snow which accumulates in these fastnesses in the winter, makes the route impossible for horses in the spring. And no one can depict the unheard of difficulties which the traveler encounters at this season. First we must go up the Columbia River with its numerous cascades, dalles and rapids in its seven hundred twenty mile course. This brings us to the base of the mountains at a post called 'Boat Encampment.'

"Death with all its horrors presents itself under every form to the frightened traveler all along this route. This was my fourth trip upstream. Often we arrive full sail at a rapid which is dotted with jagged rocks. Again, the whimsical wind drops, and the torrent sweeps away the frail bark. The pilot shouts sharply, 'Row, row!' Vain efforts; no force can stem the impetuous current. The barges dash sideways against a hidden rock; she heaves over; she is all but overturned, when by an instinctive pull of the crew, she is righted to the other side, but so violently that she splits on a rock. The water rushes in. The split is stopped up with a blanket. The oars are grasped, and after some minutes of sublime struggle we are on the bank, kneeling to thank God for our miraculous preservation.

"I have been in this extreme peril, and I shall never forget it. I was once left on the top of a rock which stood out in mid-stream, while our barge was steered to shore for indispensable repairs, that she might be prepared to brave other dangers. What distress, what heart failure one goes through in such situations! When the soul which has thus been suspended be-



tween fear and hope, life and death, finally reaches her journey's end, with what bursts of thanksgiving does she turn to God! And so, in these severe trials she finds an abundance of purest joy in our holy faith.

"I had left Fort Vancouver March 20th. On May 4th we reached Boat Encampment. I was glad beyond words to be on firm ground, and I praised God who had preserved me in so many perils. It was eight o'clock in the morning. The luggage was divided among the voyageurs, fifty pounds to each; the packs were suspended from a leather band on the head and carried on the back. Snowshoes are fastened on and the march begins. Soon a swamp covered with water from the melting snow stops us for a while. But as we must advance, we cross the swamp which stretches out twenty acres, in water knee-deep. We go into the woods to build a fire, warm ourselves, dry our footwear and lie down for the night. The prelate stretches himself on the snow, covers himself with a blanket, and sleeps the sleep of the just under the stars.

"Next day we had to put on our snowshoes for the day. We were two days in crossing a gully which was swollen with the melted snow. A little river precipitates itself here crossing and recrossing the ravine through a hundred meanderings, obliging us on the second day to cross it six times. For this painful process, we remove our snowshoes, and take hold of one another's hands to be able to stand the torrent. If after having floundered all day in snow and icy water, the traveler finds rest in some dry corner, he may consider himself fortunate. The chances are he will only have the snow, the damp or frozen ground for a bed.

"Next day we had to climb an enormous mountain, three and three-fourths of a mile, almost perpendicular, in height. The voyageurs look up at it with alarm for with their packs on their backs they will reach the top bathed in their sweat. From the foot of this mountain the ascent rises to an elevation where the snow is thirty feet deep. I was there May 7th, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, twelve thousand feet above the

Pacific Ocean, and at four in the afternoon was walking on dry land on the eastern side of this huge mountain.

"We descended the mountain through a narrow defile, bordered with bare rocks in which we fancy all sorts of shapes. In a gap made by these rocks is a glacier not less than four hundred feet high. Its ice dates from time immemorable, and never melts. When we enter this narrow valley we throw our snowshoes to the voracity of wolves and foxes, according to custom, so happy are we to be on solid ground.

"May 10th, we crossed the Athabasca River opposite Fort Jasper, from which place horses had been sent for us. We had cleared the mountains in six days, the quickest crossing on record; eight and more days was the usual time taken. From Fort Assiniboine we had to make a five days' portage on foot, for our horses were so lean we could not make up our minds to mount them.

"May 14th, the Hudson's Bay Brigade of twenty-six barges, freighted with rich pelts, welcomed us with its well-known cordiality. With us on board it was rapidly going down the Paré River, when suddenly a detachment of Blackfeet Indians, fully armed, appeared on a hill at a short distance. The rest of the tribe, two thousand strong, had set out to exterminate the Crees and sweep them from the face of the earth, they said. The ferocity of the Blackfeet is well known. In the brigade there were some hired Crees. Mr. Harriot, who had been dealing with them fifty years, and enjoyed great consideration among them, ordered the barges to shore, and hid the Crees under buffalo robes. He then went up directly to the warriors and offered them the *calumet*. Everyone sat on the ground except a proud young warrior who, mounted on his steed, did not cease to cry out for war. Finally, he let himself be subdued and said to the chief trader, 'Because it is you, I will take the calumet, and to show you that my heart is good, here is my best horse, I give it to you; accept it for your daughter.'

"At Fort Carleton on June 4th, I decided to part from the brigade, and proceed to Red River across the prairies, that I might see for the last time Bishop Provencher, the revered

prelate of the North-West. This meant six hundred miles of lonely travel. I hired a half-breed who was recommended to me as a sure guide, and two other half-breeds who did not know the way any more than I did. A cart carried the baggage and our provisions. They consisted of the worst kind of pemmican in which crushed wild cherries had been introduced. This horrible food caused a revolution in my system which nearly cost me my life. Deprived of human assistance, I had recourse to heaven, and condemned myself to a severe diet. The water we had to drink was sickening. We had to filter it in a corner of a blanket, and drink it with closed eyes so as not to see how disgusting it was.

"To this misery soon came the apprehension of dying from starvation. 'I have lost the way,' said my scared guide. 'I do not know where we are.' I was stupefied. How were we to get out of these prairies? I turned to my good heavenly Mother, and prayed my Guardian Angel to be for me, as Raphael had been for Tobias. Then I went adventurously ahead over the prairie. 'Forward,' I shouted. We prayed as we went along. My eyes wandered over the plains in fear lest some wandering Indians would pounce upon us to pillage, or even massacre us. My fears were realized, for soon in the faint distance we saw a band of sinister savages which made us stand stark still, come rushing on. My guide, recovering himself, jumped on the least poor of our horses, and galloped off to ascertain the disposition of the Indians. We watched him anxiously. Before long we saw him approach and hold out his hand in friendliness. The Indians were *Sauteux* from whom we had nothing to fear.

"Providence had other trials in store for us. The shaft of our cart broke in a place where there was no hope of finding wood to make another. 'What will become of us?' we asked of one another. Three miles away on the shores of a salt lake, a little dried, crooked aspen raised our hopes. But how far can we go with this weak, defective wood over rough and rutty places? 'O Mary, my good Mother, show thyself a mother; see that this shaft lasts till we reach a place where we can get a better one.' I began a Novena to the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary,

and full of hope, I resumed the route through the prairies. O admirable protection of Mary! The shaft supported a five hundred pound load during six days. When it broke we had a better one all prepared, with firm wood which had been found along the way.

"After twelve eternal days of the most laborious of journeys, my guide discovered the familiar road. In six days, I would be at Red River—yes, but what might not happen in that interval? Something did happen bordering on tragedy. A river much swollen by rain intercepted our passage and increased our perplexity. The water rushed like a torrent; there was no means of embarkation, and no wood with which to make a raft.

"Necessity is resourceful: I have a painted canvas which holds my blankets and is my traveling bed. Wait a while. By and by you will see me going across the mad river. I make a hoop with flexible willow branches that grow along the river. To this I attach the canvas and produce a saucer-like craft about four feet in diameter. I fasten a rope to it. On a five months' journey we carry tools, etc., for emergencies. A man coops himself in the novel skiff and holding the rope in his teeth, paddles across the river. A line of communication being thus established, in a short time men and baggage are safely brought over to the other bank.

"At last, on June 28th, quite exhausted, I crossed the Red River opposite St. Boniface, where Bishop Provencher received me with the cordiality so natural to him. Through the intelligent care of his touching hospitality, I felt my strength revive. Owing to my limited means I remained here till July 25th, to avail myself of the offer made me by a Red River merchant who was going to St. Louis, Missouri. I arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota, August 15th. This city begun only six years ago, already has some sixty houses, several stores, a good number of trade shops. It carries on commerce with St. Louis and even with New Orleans. Three times a week flat steamboats from the Mississippi bring crowds of voyageurs and visitors from all parts of the United States. The climate is mild and salubrious, the soil most fertile; everything gives promise of a grand future.



"I left here August 20th and passed through Prairie du Chien, a village containing two thousand souls, most of whom are Catholics. Like St. Paul, the village is situated on the east side of the river but three hundred fifty miles lower down. Next I came to Dubuque, forty-five miles lower, on the same Mississippi bank. This city has a population of ten thousand; seven thousand are Catholics. A magnificent cathedral is under construction. Fifteen miles farther, always descending, is Galena, which exists only six years and has a population equal to that of Dubuque, three thousand Catholics and two churches. The rapid increase in the population of this town is due to the development of copper mines in the vicinity. These towns, however, have an unhealthy climate. From here, I crossed in four days the territory of Wisconsin and came to Milwaukee on Lake Michigan. This city, which is only twenty years old, and owns as its founder a Canadian named Brumeau, still living, already numbers twenty thousand inhabitants, one half of whom are Catholics. I went on to Buffalo in three days, and on August 25th, I disembarked from the steamboat at Lachine, nine miles from Montreal. Here on April 27, 1837, I had embarked in a birch-bark canoe bound for the Red River.

"The purpose of my difficult journey to Canada is to solicit from my dear compatriots alms in favor of my mission. Thousands of pagan savages only await the coming of evangelical laborers to embrace the Cross of Jesus Christ, and be enlightened by its holy light. Generous souls will be touched by the distress of so many Indian nations who long for the blessed day of their adoption among the children of our holy Mother the Church.

MODESTE, BISHOP OF VANCOUVER."

After an absence of eleven years and four months Bishop Demers stood again on the shore of the St. Lawrence, the regal river of North America. He gazed on it long and silently inhaling the invigorating air. He had seen many rivers since he had left from here for the great fur land of the Up Country, but none such as this; the snagged Mississippi, the Red River,

so well named for its reddish mud or, as some say from the bloody conflicts on its banks between the Sioux and Sauteux; the crooked Saskatchewan, the dangerous Athabasca, the treacherous Columbia—none could compare with this majestic St. Lawrence which, like the ages from which it sprang, rolled stately on to pour itself into the mighty ocean. How his heart must have throbbed as he thought with every right of inheritance,

“This is my own, my native land.”

What wealth had he brought back to enrich it? Not gold nor silver. He had not set out with that intention. But some of his aspirations in the pursuit of goods which neither “rust nor moth consume” had been realized. He had instructed and catechized thousands of souls, and baptized hundreds. He had erected churches by the labor of his own hands. He had multiplied himself for the glory of God through spiritual and temporal channels. These were the imperishable treasures he was bringing for the substantial interests of his beloved Canada. Such the garnered fruit for God and Mother Church.

(“I offer each step for some missionary, thinking that somewhere far away, one of them is worn out with his apostolic labors; to lessen his fatigue I offer mine to God.”)

(ST. TERESA OF LISIEUX.)

---

## CHAPTER XV

---

### ADRIFT FROM HEART MOORINGS

BISHOP DEMERS went on to Montreal. Montreal was now a Bishop's See and was fast becoming the commercial metropolis of Canada. He stated the object of his coming. Could he still appeal to the generosity of Canadians, he who had already drawn so largely from their frugality, to forward Christ's kingdom in Red River and in the Columbia Territory? Assuredly.

He then hastened to Quebec. Ah! This was indeed home. The seminary! Father Gazeau! the Bishop! How the tender, loving heart of the missionary expanded to the joyful reaction of the homecoming.

He next crossed the St. Lawrence to Levis and to his birth-place, the parish of St. Nicholas. He would see the old home-  
stead. Of course the visit would renew the sorrow over the death of his revered parents. After all, he was only twenty-eight when he left for the North-West. They might have been living yet had not their death been prematurely caused by his departure for the dreaded Northland Indian missions.

In dread of the ordeal of re-entering the home where his loved ones were no more, Bishop Demers asked his cousin, Reverend Father La Hare, to go with him. The pitying friend recounts what happened.

"A chain of circumstances combined to increase the Bishop's grief. The news of his arrival had not reached the family, so his brother was not in. The door being opened we walked in, and in a back room came upon his sister-in-law and her four little children. Mrs. Demers fell upon her knees for the Bishop's blessing, but so great was her surprise and embarrassment she

could not say a word. Bishop Demers asked to be shown the room where his parents had breathed their last.

“What followed was most heart-rending. The Bishop stood and gazed at the bed where his dear father and beloved mother had passed to their eternal reward, in awesome silence and without shedding a tear. He became so purple that I feared he would have an apoplectic stroke. I hastened to divert him by calling attention to a little nephew who stood by waiting for a caress. My voice recalled him from his faintness, and he seemed relieved. He knelt, and made a sign with his hand that we should do the same. He found voice and said the *De Profundis* with much feeling. Having fulfilled this filial duty he began to take interest in his surroundings. With his customary approachable manner, he made the acquaintance of his new relatives. He gave wise advice to the young wife and her children, and returned silently to the presbytery to recover from the great emotions he had just gone through.”

Besides the call of nature to see his home and the parish where he had been baptized, made his First Communion and said his first Mass, the Bishop was actuated by a higher motive in coming to St. Nicholas. It was the fulfilling of a vow which he had made while on a trip to Fort August. On the whole, he was not a robust man, and more than once his health had been a cause of worry to the Vicar General. On this recent trip eastward, he had become so ill as to need the support of his guide while in the saddle. He had reached the house of his friend Father Brouillet so altered as to be unrecognizable. He had then promised that if his life were spared he would sing a High Mass at the altar of the Holy Sepulchre in his natal parish church. This he did. Notice of the celebration of this promised Mass was given from the pulpit and the edifice was crowded for the occasion. The parishioners were deeply impressed, but their emotion rose higher when the Bishop mounting the pulpit spoke to them, in substance, as follows:

“How good it is to see again, after an absence of eleven years, old friends, relatives, neighbors, co-parishioners; yes, it is now a long time since I stood here to bid you farewell before



starting to bring word of salvation to a land peopled with savages and barbarous Indian tribes. I have not forgotten the sympathy, the regret, with which you surrounded me. Many among you wanted to hold me back; you all spoke most discouragingly. 'Why,' you asked, 'does this young priest who might be so happy in his own country, go to a wild territory where he may die of hunger and misery? He will there have to spend his days with repulsive, dull people whom he will not understand, and still less will he be understood by them.'

"You know, dear friends, that this unattractive perspective, far from disheartening me, only increased my desire to go and spread the light of the Gospel among these rude people. Notwithstanding the medley of voices which was raised to keep me here, I plunged forward through deserts, through prairies, across mountains. I have risked myself on lakes and rivers; I have braved rapids and cascades; I have been among many barbarous tribes, each speaking its own peculiar tongue, and here I am today, to say that while you all wept over my fate, I superabounded with joy and gladness. And why? Because all unworthy as I am, I saw the blessings of heaven rain down at my side, and I bear witness that these blessings fell abundantly on the hearts of those to whom I announced the tidings of salvation. I repeat it, happy as one is here, at home I have experienced consolations among the Indians that are given to few among you in the family circle."

Bishop Demers had natural eloquence. His sermon on this occasion was an outpouring of inflamed zeal for the conversion of heathens permeated with winning piety. His words flowed from the divine inspiration with which he seemed to be flooded.

The Propagation of the Faith—this was his favorite, his unique theme. He would have wished to inoculate the minds and hearts of his auditors with zeal for the spread of the Faith; he wished to imbue them with this Catholic truth, that he who helps to save a soul carries in himself a germ of predilection.

We cannot doubt that Bishop Demers was one of the first fruits on Canadian soil of the Association of the Propagation of the Faith which had begun to spread in the Catholic world

during his boyhood. Organized by Pauline Marie Jaricot in France, 1819, and officially founded three years later, the idea of The Association of the Propagation of the Faith gripped Catholic hearts. The Association has two ends in view—to help spread the light of the Gospel by prayer and almsgiving, and to exercise charity among Catholics in new settlements, who, because of distance from priestly administration, are exposed to the danger of losing their faith.

To realize this double purpose of the Association the sums collected are distributed from the Council of Administration to missionaries for their support; for the building and maintenance of churches; for the establishing and necessary equipment of schools; for printing small prayerbooks, controversial works, and, lastly, for supplying missionaries with the means of giving medals, prayer beads, crucifixes, pictures to those to whom they minister. It is easy to see the incalculable advantages of such a world-wide crusade. In response to the pressing exhortation of Pope Gregory XVI, bishops, priests and laity, each in his respective sphere, vied with the other in promoting this far-reaching good work.

The papal appeal reads, "Faithful brethren, be animated with zeal to concur in the propagation of the religion of Jesus Christ through this large and easy means. And you, venerable bishops, zealous pastors, fervent preachers of the divine word, announce everywhere the happy fruits of this grand Association. Excite everyone to procure by this infallible means the salvation of so many souls redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Remember that salvation is promised to those who save the soul of their neighbor."

Imbued with these salutary words, Modeste Demers early resolved to give not only a part of his substance but his whole self to the sacred cause. Penetrated both from principle and from experience with the importance of the Propagation of the Faith in all its bearings, it is not surprising that his words were received with enthusiasm.

Now on the occasion of his visit to his home land he canvassed all the towns and villages of the diocese, everywhere

explaining why he was there, and begging for alms for the needs of the diocese he had to form. With tear-stained cheeks the people responded and poured money abundantly into his hands.

Here we cannot refrain from quoting Cardinal Newman's advice on helping priests: "Our forefathers, to expiate their faults, used to found a perpetual lamp before the Blessed Sacrament. Found a priest who will be a better lamp, which will give to God more glory and to the world more light."

Bishop Demers brought glory to God and shed the light of his teaching and example wherever he passed. His arrival in a parish was an occasion for a veritable ovation. Pastors as well as their flocks wanted to see him, to hear him, that they might second his zeal and contribute to the good which, as a bishop, it was his will and his obligation to do on a larger scale than as a simple priest.

Here is a fact which will give an idea of the impression made by his preaching, and of his exquisite tenderness of heart. The circumstance is related by an eyewitness. "One Sunday morning a very poor, infirm, old man, aged eighty-four, stood weeping as he leaned on the doorpost of his humble cottage. A neighbor who was hastening to church to hear the missionary, noticed him, and stopped to ask what ailed him. 'Ah, my friend,' answered the old man, 'you are very fortunate to be able to go to church and hear the holy Bishop speak about his Indian missions. I have not that happiness, but I would have loved to give him these two coppers which a charitable woman gave me. Take them to him for me.'

"The kind neighbor said, 'Père, I will help you into my buggy, and bring you to church where you can see the Bishop, and drop your coins in the box.'

"After the service, the kindly neighbor led the poor old man to the presbytery, and in presenting him to the Bishop told him how it had happened that he had brought him there.

"The old man knelt for the Bishop's blessing. Helping him to rise, the much-moved prelate embraced the octogenarian most tenderly, and said, 'Père, what you have just done, and

a thousand other things of this kind of which I am a daily witness, prove to me more and more how lively the faith is in my dear Homeland. These facts I am gathering with care to tell to my dear Indians when I am back with them. In hearing them, they will, I know, do what you yourself did this morning.'

"The Bishop could say no more. The old man wept. When the old man returned home and people dropped in to congratulate him on the favor he had received that day, the feeble old man said, 'Friends, this and my first Communion day are the two most beautiful days of my life. There now remains nothing for me to do but to pray that God may soon end my misery and open to me the gates of paradise.'

"This prayer was answered at once. That very night the old man was attacked by a violent fever. A neighbor went hurriedly for the parish priest, but the Bishop hearing of the sick call requested that he might go and administer the last rites to his old friend. The minister of God and the dying man shed tears, and those present were deeply affected. After the latter had received Holy Viaticum, Extreme Unction, and the plenary Indulgence, he took the Bishop's pectoral cross in his feeble grasp, pressed it to his lips, then to his heart and fell peacefully asleep in the Lord."

The holy Bishop loved to tell this story of faith, both in the pulpit and in conversation.

Having accomplished his mission, Bishop Demers passed into the States. He was very well received and given substantial support.

The troubles of 1847 having died down in the Old World, Bishop Demers next sailed for Europe. In the Catholic countries of France, Belgium and Italy, especially, did he forward the interests of his mission. In colleges and in seminaries, particularly, did he try to instill into the hearts of young levites the spirit of privation, of devotedness and of renunciation of which he himself was so striking an example. He preached in the principal cities and Catholic centers. The laity came with their offerings of magnificent vestments and other requisites



for the celebration of the offices of the Church. Among all these valuable gifts that of which Bishop Demers was most proud was a portable altar given him by the Count de Chambord in a visit he paid that illustrious heir to the throne of France. The altar was of mahogany and therefore very heavy for missionaries to carry about. For several years it was used on Vancouver Island, and finally taken up to the Alaska Yukon missions. With the introduction of lighter portable altars, which are more convenient, if less valuable, the Count's altar, we are given to understand, was donated to the Laval University in Quebec. The Countess de Chambord also presented the great missionary with liberal gifts.

One of the lasting benefits of the Bishop's stay in Europe was the assurance, given in Paris, of annual assistance from the Association of the Propagation of the Faith. During the Bishop's stay in France he had the happiness of assisting at the consecration, December 10, 1850, of the celebrated Bishop Dupanloup, the ideal educator, and one of the ablest French prelates of his day. On this occasion Bishop Demers received numerous donations.

In Europe as in Canada, Bishop Demers was everywhere a distinguished guest. As a mark of distinction and as an indirect means of helping his cause, he was called upon to perform ceremonies of ordination to the holy priesthood. While in Paris he ordained the first two European priests who volunteered for the Vancouver Island diocese, Reverend Louis Lootens, a Belgian from Bruges, and Pierre Marie Le Lanier.

As the Bishop was not yet ready to leave for America, he mapped out work for the newly ordained priests and sent them on in advance to the new diocese.

Father Le Lanier remained only a few years. Father Lootens gave ten or more years to the Fraser River Indians. Everything in him was in contrast with the life among Indians. He was an art connoisseur and an accomplished musician and singer. He ever deplored the decadence of liturgical chant in Church services. Twenty-five years before the encyclical of Pius X on a return to the plain chant, he composed a book on the subject.

His own compositions, though not strictly plain chant, were grave, rich and elevating. The soul of the Church was in his finger tips. It was felt in his organ touch, his singing and in his teaching to the Indians and to the orphans.

His book failed of publication, not that its merit was unrecognized, but because it was of too high an order to suit the times.

Other adverse traits which must have rendered Father Lootens' missionary life most difficult and therefore perhaps more meritorious, was his fitness to pass judgment on the perfection of household management. Nothing in that line, even to the way of folding sheets and tablecloths, escaped his criticism. Over and above all this he had an extremely delicate stomach. This is a real impediment to a missionary in an Indian country, an impediment which finally obliged the zealous apostle, as Bishop, to resign his missionary See of Idaho which he had filled from 1868 to 1878.

Bishop Demers arrived in Rome, October, 1850. He went directly to the Vatican to present his homage to the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, and to receive his blessing and encouragement.

Returning homeward, he made a prolonged stay in England. Here, as elsewhere, he acted on Father Daniel Considine's rule that, "To be zealous is to get 'busy' for God." And he was certainly busy. The following letter addressed to the Secretary of State shows some of his activities.

London, August 29, 1850  
Rt. Reverend M. Demers, Bishop of Vancouver Island  
to  
Benjamin Howes Esq., Sec.

*Sir:* I have the honor to inform you that I am a British subject, being born in Canada, and that on the 17th of July, 1846, I was nominated and since have been consecrated, Roman Catholic Bishop of Vancouver Island. I have the happiness to be one of the first two missionaries sent out to Oregon, where

I have performed the sacred duties of the ministry among the French Canadians and the natives of that country for over ten years.

Besides Vancouver Island, I am administrator, *pro tempore*, of two other dioceses which are, first, the Queen Charlotte Islands, including the seacoast north to the Russian settlements; second, New Caledonia.

No doubt you know that a certain number of Canadians, after leaving the Hudson's Bay Company's service, have been settling, with their families, in the Willamette Valley which now belongs to the United States. On my leaving Oregon, some of them were telling me, they would willingly go and settle on Vancouver Island, if the Company would allow them to do so.

I have every reason to believe that the establishment of a Catholic mission on the island would cause many of them, as well as those that are free, to settle on it. This they would not do, if they had not the prospect of having a clergyman among them.

The state of things being so, I will now take the liberty of exposing to you my present situation. In the whole territory committed to my care, there are about fifty thousand Indians, of whom I may say four thousand are already enrolled under the sacred banner of Christianity. Not having a single missionary to help me, I saw the necessity of coming over to Europe to find the means of bringing a certain number of clergymen, that would devote themselves, and follow me. A passage for each of them will cost seventy-five pounds. Nothing is done yet; I have no house, no place of worship.

This information may lead you to the object I have in view in giving it. I am aware that several Roman Catholic Bishops in the British possessions are allowed a yearly sum by her Majesty's government; this motive encourages me to ask for the same favor, and I am in hopes that it will be extended to the poor missions of Vancouver Island, where nothing shall be spared to promote the welfare, both spiritual and tem-

poral, of her Majesty's subjects in that remotest part of her Dominions.

Please lay this letter before his Lordship, the Minister of the Colonies.

I have the honor to be Sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

Modeste Demers, R. C. Bishop of  
Vancouver Island.

9 Buston St.  
Spilalfields, London.

What the answer to this memorial was is left to conjecture, but there is no doubt that it was favorable.

In the spring of 1851, the Bishop came back to America. Always intent on the organization of his diocese, he went from place to place *earning* the alms he received by preaching, substituting and officiating. In the life of Mother Aloysia Hardey, Religious of the Sacred Heart, it is noted that on November 27th, of this year, Archbishop Hughes of New York performed the ceremony of "consecrating the chapel of Eden Hall, Philadelphia, assisted by Bishop Demers."

It was no figure of speech that the heart-sick Bishop-elect Demers expressed when he said, "Rome by making me Bishop has cut off my feet." During the four years since his consecration, he had done nothing, it is true, but use his feet to exhaustion. He had traveled through the cities and hamlets of Canada, United States and Europe. He had associated with the highest in Church and State always for the cause of the Propagation of the Faith on the Pacific Coast especially. But how much freer he would have been, following where his heart led in the wilds of New Caledonia, living the life of the Indians and extending his hand to their rude but well meant advances. With what alacrity would he have turned from the honors and civilities of civilization to follow Christ.

Where foxes have holes  
and the birds of the air their nests,  
but the Son of God  
hath not whereon to rest His head.



## PART TWO



---

## CHAPTER XVI

---

### THE SYMBOL

THE rain was pouring on the southern extremity of Vancouver Island, Sunday, August 29, 1852, when a canoe battling with the waves of Juan de Fuca Strait headed for the shore and beached on Cadboro Bay. A passenger who during the crossing had gazed upon the coast with meditative eyes, stepped out. At once he prostrated himself and kissed the pebbly beach; then rising he knelt on a log, and in the name of Catholicism, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, he took possession of the heathen land.

It was a sacred trust committed to him by the successor of St. Peter. Lost in the thought of the mighty responsibility of his office, he remained there a long time, unconscious of the rain. Like the apostles sent forth to evangelize nations, he felt the need of the supernatural power, implied in the divine command:

Go ye into the whole world  
and preach the gospel  
to every creature.

to undertake the task which lay before him.

The prayer of humble, trustful supplication rose from his heart: "Lord, heed not the sins and unworthiness of Thy servant; remember only the glory of Thy holy name and the honor of Thy church. O Mary, Mother of Mankind, ye blessed Apostles, ye Guardian Angels, assist me to raise the standard of Jesus Christ, and establish the true faith in this infidel country."

In this manner did Bishop Modeste Demers, the apostle of British Columbia, take possession of his diocese. There were present to witness the touching scene two Indians who had,

paddled the canoe, two priests, whose names have not come down to us and a layman in the capacity of brother. This layman, who was known as Anthony, came to a life of sacrifice in these Indian missions, in fulfilment of a thanksgiving vow made for the conversion of his father.

The Bishop had not been expected. This accounts for his not having been met by Father Lootens and the subdeacon who had been in Victoria a few months. That the Bishop should have arrived unannounced in the days before the telegram and wireless were in use should not surprise us, for communication along the coast was irregular. Only in 1854 was there a contract to carry mail between Puget Sound and Victoria; seven months later the *Mayor Tompkins* which carried it was wrecked in Victoria Harbor. That ended regular mail service for quite a while.

The Bishop and his party, therefore, who had come from Europe to Fort Vancouver, by way of the Straits of Magellan, left ship at the Fort and proceeded to Victoria by canoe. This they did, no doubt, to gain time on the ship's annual arrival at Victoria.

On his way up Puget Sound the Bishop stopped in Seattle. Mr. Arthur A. Denny, the interesting diarist of that ten-months-old town, has this entry: "The first religious service in Seattle was by Bishop Demers, a Catholic, in 1852."<sup>1</sup> And his daughter Lenora recalls "The Bishop's subject was Charity. I was a very little girl when I heard this, the first sermon I remember; but the speaker's earnestness impressed itself most vividly upon me, as he repeated his text often, saying, 'Charity, my friends, Charity.' "

Bishop Demers spent the night with A. A. Denny's family, and his genial, kindly ways were, as the latter records in "Pioneer Days in Puget Sound," still a pleasant memory to Mrs. Denny and her children after a lapse of fifty-six years.

Meanwhile, Bishop Demers is directing his steps towards Fort Victoria and soon finds the house where his clergy—the one priest and the sub-deacon—reside.

<sup>1</sup> *Pioneer Days in Puget Sound*, A. A. Denny, 1908.



The following Sunday, his installation took place in the presence of some forty people. The three priests and the sub-deacon came forward to offer their ecclesiastical fealty.

Where? In the small house which answered the purpose of a church and rectory. The Bishop explains in his usual bright way: "The reason why my installation did not take place in the Cathedral is that the lumber to be used in its construction is still standing in the forest."

After all, there was nothing unusual in this poor inauguration of the Catholic Church on Vancouver Island. Such have been like ceremonies in pioneer countries the world over since Christianity issued from the Catacombs.

As Angels brought tidings of great joy to men of good will through heavenly music, so did the zealous prelate announce the blessing of church services through bell music. Among his freight packages brought from Europe by way of Cape Horn was a bell purchased in London. This Bishop Demers blessed and erected September 19th. The little settlement lent itself with right good will to the preparations for the event. They stripped three trunks of trees, fixed two of them firmly in the ground and laid the third horizontally across. Soon the hills and plains of Victoria reverberated for the first time to the sound of the Angelus which since that day has never failed to proclaim three times a day that the Mother of God is side by side with her Divine Son to guide the citizens of Victoria heavenwards. As on a previous occasion, fourteen years back, Bishop Demers had been the first to ring the prayer of Mary in Cowlitz, so did he hold to the same privilege on this occasion.

This auspicious event is thus registered in the records of the Cathedral:

"Blessing of a Bell. This nineteenth of September, eighteen hundred and fifty-two, we have solemnly blessed the first bell in the diocese of Vancouver Island, which we have placed under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and on whom we imposed the name of 'Marie.'

✠ MODESTE, Bishop of Vancouver."

The city of Victoria which received this favor in the early days of its settlement, was the episcopal residence of Bishop Demers, and has continued as such to his successors to the present time.<sup>2</sup>

The city grew from the Hudson's Bay Fort established there in 1843. It is the last Canadian port of call from which shipping is carried on with the Orient. Nature has given it every feature of stream and sea, plain and hill, trees and flora, with a balance of sunshine and moisture that keeps the landscape fresh and green the year round.

The city has had a succession of names. The first was its Indian form Camosun; the second, Port Albert, after Queen Victoria's consort; then Fort Victoria. Finally, when the city had reached the importance of having mapped streets, "fort" was dropped, and Victoria remained in honor of her gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, then reigning.

British Columbia, the name of the most western province of the Dominion of Canada, was of slower growth. At first, the greater part of it to the north was called New Caledonia, and the part south, along the Columbia River, was named Columbia, but where one ended and the other began did not matter then. In time, it became evident that Columbia in North America and Columbia in South America would be confusing. Then, too, Columbia is the poetic name for the United States. The matter was settled in 1845 when the 49th parallel was accepted as the boundary between Oregon and the British Territory. In the partition which followed it was decided through compliment, they say, that *British* be added to the name of the portion relinquished by Uncle Sam. Be that as it may, the full name, British Columbia, was officially sanctioned in 1858. It is a glorious combination.

The name "New Caledonia," partly because of objections raised by France that it had a colony of that name in Oceanica, was gradually absorbed into that of British Columbia. New Caledonia was so called by the explorer, Simon Fraser, in 1608.

<sup>2</sup> The title "Diocese of Vancouver Island" was changed to "Diocese of Victoria," September 6, 1904.

Of Scottish parentage, Simon Fraser was born in the United States and spent his boyhood on the Hudson. The descriptions of Scottish scenery given him by his mother so impressed him that connecting them with the beautiful panorama of mountains which extended for miles around Stuart Lake, he named that region after the country of his ancestors.

The Queen Charlotte Islands included in Bishop Demers' diocese are quite unimportant even to this day. Two of the islands are beginning to export lumber and fish on a small scale. That a bishopric has not been established there, as had been proposed in 1848, is an illustration of the wisdom of Rome.

But Bishop Demers had first to concentrate on organization in his diocese. He began by sending priests to minister among the Indians on the Fraser River, and on Vancouver Island. Then there was the primary matter of locating property for a church and a clergy residence in Victoria, as also for a future convent. Catholicity had come to stay.

The most desirable lots were on the plateau which slopes towards the strait, but these were owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, its employees and early settlers. The next available, near the center of the town which was in the making, were down the incline. The Bishop bought six lots in block twenty-nine, on what is now Humboldt and Collinson Streets, from the Hudson's Bay Company under Chief Factor James Douglas. This purchase he testified to in court May 3, 1861.

As most urgent, he built the residence for the clergy, setting apart half of it for divine service. How he lived before this was built the Bishop himself tells with his usual kindness and light-heartedness in a letter to a schoolmate in Quebec:

"Your poor bishop-friend has been alone these last seven weeks. His episcopal palace is a small tent, and all by himself he forms a perfect Chapter where all the Canons are remarkable for their orderly conduct. When the prelate is cooking, kneading the dough or baking it on the sheet iron of a small stove, the entire episcopal house assists at the operation. Brotherly love and silence are observed in a way which would

have delighted St. Paul. Once in a while, though, when the rats are making a terrible racket at night, then your friend Demers makes use of his 'faculties,' but he does so in French—the French of Lower Quebec—and the rodents do not seem to mind it much."

The Bishop could write in this merry strain though he had but recently recovered from a serious illness, and was never free from rheumatism. He had brought from Montreal an electro-medical apparatus to apply for treatment, but it could be of no use in the lodging he occupied.

However, his ailments did not alter his gaiety. He says, "As for my lodging all I can say is that, without being comfortable, I am not suffering from cold as I did last year; the wind does not now come in to blow out my candle, and in the morning I do not have to break an inch of ice in my wash basin. These improvements are due to much labor and a quantity of paper which has been pasted on the walls. The greatest improvement is that I have succeeded in turning out the kitchen; henceforth the cooking will be done in a lean-to."

The winters of 1853-54 were unusually severe; besides the suffering they brought to unprepared settlers, the loss of cattle everywhere in British Columbia was very considerable. At this time, too, the Bishop sustained the loss of a missionary who, on the way to the diocese with three companions, died of the hardships of the overland route before reaching his journey's end.

Soon after 1854 the Bishop was notified by the Hudson's Bay Company that they would have to discontinue the free passage extended to missionaries for the past thirty-five years. This was not an indication that the good intentions of the company were changed but the notable decrease in the fur trade made the withdrawal of privilege necessary. This greatly restricted the travels of the missionaries over Bishop Demers' wide area. It put an end to his plan of sending a priest to the Indians of New Caledonia, to those Indians whose simplicity had appealed to him in his short stay among them about ten



years before. Now with priests to favor his design, he had not the financial means to accomplish it.

But this zealous shepherd of souls did not give up hope. "I am decided," he writes, "to continue to advance God's cause in those distant regions, in spite of all obstacles, as soon as I have the necessary funds to do so."

What could he do with a meager annual revenue, eked out through alms and the Propagation of the Faith, of ten or twelve thousand dollars. Moreover, with the high cost of everything in the colony even this sum represented in buying value only a quarter of its face value. Considering this, and that the Victoria settlement could not even provide for itself, the Bishop bought a farm. Son of a farmer and able workman that he was, he directed the operation of the farm, and made himself responsible for its management. As things became more prosperous, he sold the land in 1861.

Except for the meager white population, which numbered about five hundred, the work of the missionaries was wholly among the Indians, both about Victoria, up the Island and along the Fraser River on the mainland.

In their intercourse with the Indians the missionaries found much that would have been interesting did they not encounter at the same time proof that passion ruled the natives to excess. The Feast of the Blankets entered into this category of interesting circumstances. Both the name and the principle of "The Feast" were simple enough, but avarice and cupidity for a coveted blanket raised envy and desire for possession to the highest pitch of rage. Bishop Demers tells us, "They, the Indians, thought only of that, and lived only for that"; it was a real mania for these poor children of the woods for whom the *blanket* played the most important role.

The feast took place in the fall after the taking-in of the potato crop. The festivities were presided over by the chiefs and great personages of the tribe; the whole neighborhood was invited. The menu for the feast was very simple; it consisted of potatoes either boiled or baked in ashes, and boiled or dried salmon. These courses were dished in bark, or in

rough wooden platters, placed on the ground. Quantity supplied variety. The guests ate, and ate more. Appetite was whetted by speeches in which the qualities of the host were exalted—his liberality, his generosity, his riches, above all, his Ekita—that is, his blankets. At this the speaker threw longing glances at the piled-up cases of the precious articles. Already he enjoyed their possession in anticipation.

Finally, the time for distribution comes. It is the psychological moment, the solemn climax to the celebration. Profound silence reigns in the assembly. The king of the feast, with all possible dignity and grandeur, advances gravely to the blanket cases. He takes out forty or fifty, the fruit of a year's toil and saving. He opens and displays each, with complacency, to the beholders. Then he commences to distribute them to the chiefs according to their rank. Soon only a few are left. As everyone, cost what may, must have a souvenir of the feast, a grab is made for the remainder. The blankets are dragged, pulled, torn, anything so long as a remnant may be had.

The aim of all this emulation to procure the greatest number of blankets to give away, or to be torn into shreds, was to acquire the right to become a chief, or at least a great man—a tyee. In other words, it was to buy a reputation. The sequel was that those who had given were in turn invited, and in the measure that they had distributed did they receive.

Father Demers, commenting on this passion for blankets, says, "I rather like the idea of the priest who, to reproach the Indians for this inordinate passion, represented the heart of a savage transpierced with the corner of a blanket."

Some of the tribes, the Cowichans of Vancouver Island, for instance, believed in the transmigration of souls. At the death of a relative or friend, a big fire was lighted near the place where the person had died, and for several days a great uproar was kept up to prevent the deceased from re-entering the lodge and taking possession of the soul of one of the living members.

Another superstition common in this tribe was that whenever they left for the mainland all the travelers were to keep

absolute silence from the time of their leaving till they landed at their destination. Nor were they to eat, nor drink, nor look back, under the penalty of perishing. Does not this last injunction remind us of the story of Lot's wife?

But the inveterate, diabolical superstition was belief in the *Tamanwas*, or grand Medicine Man. Nothing can be conceived more horrible than the scenes depicting the hellish obsession that accompanied the initiation rites. Gathered in a big lodge, provided with all the instruments that superstition could suggest, the men struck up an atrocious, vulgar and monotonous song to the accompaniment of a frightful noise made by beating sticks or poles against the walls or the roof of the building. The savages howled, screeched, fumed and sang with wide-open throats with the vim of wild though would-be musicians. When livelier beats announced the end of the song, they sent forth a hideous growl which was meant to send the *Tamanwas*, or spirit, into one of those present, probably one who had been designated beforehand.

After this hubbub had been repeated two or three times, the young man on whom the spirit had fallen rose and ran from side to side, precipitating himself on the savages as if he would devour them. Then he went outside. Painted grotesquely, he looked like a demon. He uttered terrific screams and acted madly as if he would destroy himself. The *Tamanwas* had taken hold of him. When several together fell under the power of the spirit it was horrible. In this manner the Medicine Man was made.

Neither the presence of the whites nor of the missionaries could stop the Indians; on the contrary they deemed it a point of honor to continue these revolting and burlesque scenes in the presence of onlookers. The pandemonium lasted two or three days, till the participants dropped half-dead from the exertion.

Bishop Demers in relating these sad things judged it well-nigh impossible to convert unhappy tribes enslaved by such passion. He predicted that these infamous practices were so

deeply rooted in the people that they could die out only with the extinction of the race.

And yet it took very little to bring spiritual consolation to the missionary Bishop. He experienced holy joy in preparing thirteen wives of French Canadians and a half-breed child for Holy Communion. He says, "You have no idea of the time and patience it requires to put the first rudiments of Christian doctrine and the most elementary catechism lessons into the heads of these women, even when confining oneself to what is strictly necessary. One has to repeat and repeat every day, and if you ask a question, the invariable answer is, 'I do not know,' or if they do know passably one day, they can say nothing the next."

In the spring of 1855, Bishop Demers felt free to absent himself from Victoria to make the visitation to the Indians up the east side of the Island. Of course, he was to the manner born in a canoe. At first the craft that the Bishop chose for his trip up the Coast, pushed by the vigorous strokes of the rowers, glided on easily over the water. Generally the Indians soon dispensed themselves from all danger of possible fatigue and waste of energy. With this sense of conservatism, which had its root in confirmed laziness, they made use of a superstition known as "Call of the Wind."

The practice of this superstition consisted in whistling while brandishing the oars and sending jets of water on both sides of the canoe. Then the rowers threw some article into the waves, an old garment, a coat or a shoe, and cried out, "Blow, old woman." Then they set their sails and waited for the wind.

That day, however, there was no need of calling the wind. The bark carried something greater than "Caesar and his destiny." It was conducting an apostle sent and guided by God for the conversion of heathens. A delightful breeze filled the sails, and the canoe gently entered the large, deep, magnificent Cowichan Bay. All along one side the waters bathed the foot of lofty Mount Tzouhalem. If you look at the mountain intently, and if your imagination is strong enough, you may



notice in its formation, about halfway up, the resemblance to a huge frog. The natives will tell you, quite seriously, that once the water spread over the whole earth. Everyone was drowned except some of their antecedents who were carried by a big frog, and left safe and sound on this mount. The story of the Deluge, in some form or other, is found among all primitive people.

Chief Tzouhalem, the Cowichan leader, was not worthy of the distinction. In fact he was a very cruel man. He also practised polygamy with a vengeance, for he had twenty wives.

But here comes the Great Priest. He is hailed with joyful demonstration. A discharge of musketry resounds through the air. Men, women and children press forward to the spot where the Bishop alights. They stand in line as the great guest goes from one to the other shaking hands with everyone. What an ordeal to go through this etiquette of handshaking, and not with manicured hands either, hundreds of times, smilingly, of course. Oh, it is deserving of a heavenly crown!

In the crowd were some who came as old acquaintances of the Bishop, for they had been in the great gathering on the Fraser when the "first man of prayer" had given his mission there fourteen years before. What emotions filled the heart of the devoted prelate at these familiar demonstrations! They reminded him of the time when he lived the life of the savages, a nomad with them as he went about the plains of Upper Oregon and coasted the enchanting shores of Puget Sound.

The eager curiosity of the natives was the same here as there, only it was now intensified by the marks of office which raised the Bishop, in their eyes, from the rank of a simple priest to that of the "Great Priest." To their wondering eyes the mitre was a "tall hat," and the crozier the "crooked stick."

Now the best hut in the Cowichan village had been prepared for their guest. All about the house the ground was levelled and overlaid with crushed oyster and clam shells. This gave a certain attraction to the place and showed the good will of the natives to honor the visit of the Great Priest. Installed in this impromptu palace, the genial Bishop held high

levee. It was the first of the kind on which the sun of the Pacific Coast had ever shed its rays. The happy natives enjoyed it to the full. How free and easy they were with the great dignity of Mother Church! How paternal and condescending was this Christ-like man who, like his Master, wished to gather these dear people under his pastoral mantle as "the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings."

They asked him all sorts of questions. What had he been doing all this time? Where had he been? How many people had he visited? And they showed him their ingenious method of calculating time since they had seen him. One had adopted the method of counting by making a knot every day on a long string. The string was now yards and yards long. Another had a more ingenious idea. He had seven packages, each containing one hundred little sticks, the total of which indicated precisely the number of Sundays since 1841. The good old acquaintances were glad to see their missionary priest again. They could not find words to tell him how much they had thought of him, and that they had kept his word in their hearts.

The Bishop answered their questions; he congratulated them; he thanked them. Then he told them of his visit to Europe and of the splendors of Rome. The enthusiasm of these children of nature reached its height when he told them of his happiness in seeing the Pope; he who, by his position, his talents, his virtues and exceeding kindness, is the highest personage in the world. The prelate went on to say that he had spoken to the Great Chief about his Christians, and that on hearing of them His Holiness had said he loved them all tenderly, and had charged the Bishop with blessing them in his name. At these words, the crowd of Indians knelt, and with foreheads on the ground received the blessing sent them from on high. In this trip the Bishop used the portable altar presented to him by the Count de Chambord.

After some days of instruction and the bringing back to the minds of the Indians the truths they had received fourteen years before, the Bishop had them call the four other villages

together that he might celebrate the Holy Sacrifice in their presence. About six hundred answered the invitation. What an intolerable medley of discordant sounds was kept up during the Mass! The Bishop had told the people to sing, and sing they did. The roof was almost lifted from the lodge by their truncated and impossible airs; but it was all well meant, and each tried to outdo the other in showing off his best.

The Great Priest then gave an instruction which lasted some hours. The supreme point of his admonitions was the abolition of polygamy. But complete renouncement of such a widespread practice could be attained only through evangelical mildness and with the tender solicitude of a paternal heart. The sublime truths of faith had to be given in the simplest words and illustrated in the clearest possible manner. Even then the missionary was never sure of being understood.

But this visitation of the Bishop was no idle ceremony. At the close of the strenuous week of teaching he wished to find out for himself if peace and union reigned between the couples who had duly received the Sacrament of Matrimony, for the first thing to do in establishing the religion of Christ on a permanent basis is to place marriage on a foundation of fidelity.

The Bishop instituted a sort of court. He called before him the persons that had been married by the priest, and made them produce the piece of wood, serving as their marriage certificate, on which their names and those of their children were written. He also had them show a little stick of a particular make on which their Baptism was recorded. This was renewed on application, whenever it had been lost, or the name inscribed on it had been forgotten. The examination was long and thorough. The couples passed before the Bishop in turn; they made solemn promises, took good resolutions and sealed them by pressing the hand of the Great Priest.

The mission had been fruitful. The marriage bond had again been strengthened and sanctified; children, and several adults had been baptized; Christian life had for the second time been infused into the veins of the neophytes. Everything promised well for the future. The Bishop blessed his children

of the wilds and promised to send them a priest who would stay with them permanently.

During his stay with the Cowichans, neighboring tribes had sent couriers to learn if the Bishop would visit their camps, "that we may," said they, "build him a cabin." They had noticed he carried no tent.

Bishop Demers was just setting out for the next village when news came that a war was imminent with the powerful tribe of Tangas. A thousand rumors floated in the air casting fear and apprehension on all sides. The Bishop was used to such rumors. So far they had proved to be exaggerations or false reports. Were they instigated by the father of lies to frighten the missionary into turning back? If so, Satan did not know with whom he had to deal.

The Bishop raised the courage of the rowers so that, after much talk for and against, the young men armed themselves with guns and ammunition and started off. The Bishop, as was his custom, placed himself and his party under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. They left early in the morning and arrived at the camp of the Tlintlilitz at seven that evening. The same procedure followed as with the Cowichans—the inevitable handshaking, but this time it was preceded by a general Sign of the Cross. At a signal from the chief, all hands were raised to a level with the eye; at a second signal, the sacred symbol was finished. The lesson so thoroughly taught on the banks of the Columbia in 1841 had spread to the remotest parts of the territory.

At this camp the Bishop witnessed a ceremony new to him. It was the betrothal of the three-year-old son of a young chief with the one-year-old daughter of another chief. The custom was marked by discourses on either side, and the making of mutual gifts in the name of the future pair.

The third visit was at the camp of the Penelakuts. The old chief who held to the honor of receiving the Great Priest in his cabin, had done his best to do so in a distinguished manner. He had panelled his abode with cedar-woven mats. The premises were paved with the usual crushed shells. He had even



sent young men to a great distance to fish for rock-cod. The enormous size of this fish made it worthy of a place on the table of princes, but here it was served to an honored guest on a floor mat.

"As for myself," says the Bishop with his unfailing good humor, "I had nothing to complain about; I was sharing the lot of so many bishops for whom Mother Earth is both bed and board."

The Bishop saw here for the first time an Indian fort. This one which enclosed all the village cabins, was built as a protection against the incursions of the terrible Yougletas from the lower Fraser. The Bishop describes it as being about two hundred feet by fifty and surrounded by posts twenty feet high. At regular distances, enormous tree trunks were sunk deep in the ground to solidify the encircling posts which were much shorter. On top of the tree trunks there were figures, supposedly human, but in them it would be difficult to say whether the grotesque or the ridiculous prevailed. "The best thing for you to do," says the Bishop in describing them, "if you wish for a better idea than I can convey, is to blend both adjectives." They were ridiculous and grotesque.

The dominant feature among the Jantekas whom the Bishop next visited was its chief, Big Joe. Big Joe was celebrated in war annals, and bore noble scars that testified to his bravery. He was a soldier in the full sense of the word. His qualities and friendly relations with the whites had won for him a military accoutrement, which he proudly wore,—above his naked feet. He was the only person in all the country around that had been so distinguished. Besides, he had been given a small cannon which gave him an advantage over his foes. We are told that at the arrival of the Great Priest he fired several shots, "ably and vociferously."

With his love of display and grandeur it naturally followed that Chief Joe set everything in motion to make the event the most important his people had ever seen. How he succeeded goes to prove that he could do things worthy of finding a place in history. He demolished the bastion of the magnificent fort

which he had heretofore built against the raids of the Yougletas! In its stead he put up a spacious and comfortable house for the use of the missionaries when they should sojourn there.

The motive that had actuated Chief Joe in pulling down the bastion was most consoling to Bishop Demers. It showed him that, while he knew better than anyone else the weakness of human nature in general, and that of the Indian in particular, his teaching on the Fraser had put a stop to the warring instincts of the Yougletas. They now lived peaceably so that the forts were no longer a necessity. Realizing this, Chief Joe in destroying the bastion had really paid a compliment to the Man of Peace, the Great Priest.

Another historical incident on this Up-Island tour was of a nature to encourage the Man of God: Chief Schomisk and his tribe lived on the upper Fraser; the warrior and his followers had come across the Gulf of Georgia to sell furs at the Nanaimo coal mines. There they were told that the Man of Prayer of whom they had often heard, but had never seen, had just arrived. They immediately went to pay their respects. When they had come near the Bishop, the Chief gave a signal. All made the Sign of the Cross in their own language. At another signal they approached, with downcast eyes, and before shaking hands, made a second Sign of the Cross followed by the recitation of the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed, and the singing of some hymns.

The Bishop was all the more pleasantly surprised because these Indians had never seen a priest. They had learned the prayers and hymns from Indians who had been visited by missionaries. They had translated them, learned them by heart and chanted them twice a day. Rejoice, thou hard-worked Missionary Demers, thy labors have not all been in vain!

The last stage of the tour was at Nanaimooks, the Nanaimo of today. No priest had ever been there, but some of the people from there had been in Langley, on the mainland, at the great meeting of 1841, and recently others had received a few religious notions in Cowichan. But the Indians found it very

difficult to sing or to pray, exposed as they were to the ridicule of the miners of Nanaimo, most of them irreligious men.

To counteract the effect of ridicule and bad example the missionary organized a big demonstration with imposing ceremonies, such as had been held in Langley. The Bishop was soon surrounded by several thousand Indians, comprising fifteen tribes. The brave but dreaded Yougletas were there represented by about nine hundred men, women and children.

Everything passed with great solemnity and magnificent pomp. As soon as the procession of all these tribes had passed before Bishop Demers, and silence, by order of a chief, was secured, one of the chiefs stepped forward, and raising his voice in grave and majestic language, said to his followers, "It is fit that we show the Great Priest that we know something of his prayers, but before our hands touch his, let us raise them to make the Sign of the Cross."

The immense crowd slowly pronounced in a loud, cadenced voice this grand act of our holy religion. Bishop Demers was moved to tears. Writing about it he says, "I cannot convey to you the impression I experienced in seeing and hearing these Signs of the Cross. It is indefinable, but at the same time grand and sublime. The harmony of these thousand voices, blended on three octaves, whose beauty is tinged with a certain melancholy, grips your very heart."

Without neglecting the other tribes, the Bishop gave special instructions to the Yougletas and to their allies, the Satallootooks, those fierce clans who, after having long terrorized all the others, had suddenly become peaceable, at the coming of the priest.

Nanaimo is the setting for the remarkable story, so often told, of the power of the Sign of the Cross. Let us hear it from Father Demers: "A month before my arrival at the Nanaimooks, the Yougletas heard through a false report that I was already there. Désirous of seeing the man of whom so much was said, they set out in thirty canoes. They plied oars and sails to reach Nanaimo with the least possible delay. As they rounded Gabriola Island their big canoes, fifty by seven feet,

with painted, carved, flattish prow twice the height of the rest of the canoe standing out of the water, they were recognized. A bad reputation dies hard. The Nanaimooks, remembering past cruelties, were seized with terror. The cry, 'Thirty Yougletas canoes,' went round like wild fire; quickly, preparations for defence were made.

"The Yougletas flotilla, with pacific intent, continued to advance, while the whole village was in disorder and confusion taking up arms to oppose a vigorous attack. The Yougletas were beginning to come ashore, when to their consternation they saw the Nanaimooks coming out of the camp, arms in hand and uttering the blood-curdling war cry. The reformed Yougletas had come to see the Man of Prayer, the Man of Peace, the man who with the word of the Great Chief from above made the hearts of the savage good and straight—to be thus received! They were wholly unprepared to defend themselves, having left their arms behind them. They tried by words and signs to show their friendly intentions. All in vain.

"What to do in such a critical situation? A thought flashed through their minds. The Cross, their last resource! It will not fail them! The chief, making a gesture, said, 'Let us all, men, women and children, make the Sign of the Cross. It is our only means of showing the Nanaimooks our harmless intentions.' Scarcely had he finished this appeal when they all, numbering six hundred, with one accord signed themselves with the Sign of Redemption. The sacred symbol was understood. The Nanaimooks dropped their arms and hastened to the beach to extend the hand of cordiality to the visitors.

"'In this sign thou shalt conquer.'"





*Sister M. Luke, S.S.A.*

THE ARRIVAL OF THE YUGLETAS  
AT NANAIMO



---

## CHAPTER XVII

---

### CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

THE peace and well being of society would be assured if religion and civil authority always acted hand in hand. The case has already been cited of the distillers of intoxicants in Oregon. The priests inveighed against the evil; the public was stirred, the law supported the cause and the disorder was checked.

There is a strong example of like beneficial results from similar co-operation in the handling of a murder case among the Cowichan Indians. In the spring of 1863, Bishop Demers again made the tour of the Up-Island missions that then ended at Nanaimo. He tells us he bore the fatigue of this in-and-out trip in a manner that astonished him. The journey was made historical by his part in siding with the laws of justice in bringing two Indian murderers to deliver themselves up.

The Cowichan tribe consisted of six camps each with its particular name. They occupied, as the remnant of the tribe still does, the bay district of that name, three by six miles, along the coast. A limpid river, that has its source in a lovely lake thirty miles up, empties itself into the bay through six branches; at each of these mouths one of the six camps was situated.

The valley was well timbered and favorable also to agriculture. There was every inducement for immigrants to settle there. The Indians looked askance at the newcomers, and three of their number, urged by drink and by the instinct for pillage, committed unprovoked murder. Great was the terror and dismay of the tribe when in consequence of the murder of three white men, an English man-of-war entered the bay to capture the culprits. The simple natives imagined that the gunboat would bombard and burn the camps. The Bishop made them

understand that civilized nations only seize the guilty without injuring the innocent, provided, however, these do not place obstacles in the course of justice.

This assurance calmed the Indians, all the more as St. Ann's camp, where the Bishop was lodging, wished that the murderers should be punished. The old chief, an excellent Catholic, also wanted to see justice done, the more so since his son had been assassinated the previous winter by the same three murderers.

When the chief of police came ashore, he first went to consult the holy Bishop. This done, he went, accompanied by only two men, to the place where the culprits were in hiding ten miles away. Soon the old chief approached him saying, "Have no fear, you will have no trouble with us. The young men will deliver themselves up, but first they want to speak to the 'Great Priest.'" By this it can be judged how great was the confidence of the Indians in the Catholic priest. In the village everything was mournful expectancy. All eyes were turned in the direction of the three guilty men when they appeared accompanied by their friends. Quite haggard by fear and exposure, they instinctively turned to the Man of God. Such emergencies of spiritual office are very trying to the heart of a Pastor of Souls.

Deeply affected, but strong in the sense of duty, the Bishop stood, with Father Rondeau beside him, at the foot of a cross which he had years before planted on Comiaken Hill and addressed the offenders in terms that would reach their hearts and minds.

"A long time ago," he said, "when I was in my country, my heart wept over the fate of the poor Indians in this country because they were unhappy, not having heard the good word, the word of the Chief above who alone can make hearts good. Yes, my heart wept with the desire the Chief above had put into it to come and bring to the savages the good prayer that Jesus Christ, His Son, had Himself brought on earth.

"The Chief above had pity on me; he made me happy; I found a way of coming to you. It is now twenty-five winters



since I am in the midst of you. I, and the priests who are with me have always and everywhere given the good word to the Indians. Our tongue has got tired in making it known, and we have announced it, and are still announcing it whole and entire. We have never hidden any of it from the Indians.

"When Jesus Christ was on earth, and Himself gave His word, all the men did not take it; those who wanted to be good took it; those who did not want to cast the bad from their hearts did not accept it. It went into their ears but it did not go into their hearts.

"It has been so among you Indians. You have all heard the word but many of you have heard it without minding it. It died in your ears and you have not become good. You, young men, heard it when you were young; you received the holy water on your heads; perhaps, I myself gave it to some of you. But as you grew up, you did like the bad, and you became bad yourselves. You have thrown shame on the good Word, and on God's water. Now your heart is pitiful, and it weeps, not mine; I wanted to make you good, and you would not."

These words were well understood. One of the men in the name of the other two confessed their guilt. They showed regret for their folly in not having heeded the word of the Great Priest, and said, "We will walk to the gunboat without being handcuffed."

Once aboard the man-of-war they were put into chains. Soon they were brought to court and condemned to death. They submitted to the execution with every evidence of repentance and of edifying Christian sentiments. This severe but just example was most salutary. The men who suffered capital punishment belonged to a band of pirates who had previously murdered eleven whites. The love of pillage had even drawn mothers to excite their children to such infamous enterprises. Leniency on this occasion would have been a crime, for the savages, whom unaided religion would not have sufficed to reform, were brought to order through fear of the gibbet.

Public opinion recognized the Bishop's mediation on this occasion. The *Colonist* has, under date of May 6, 1863: "The

Right Reverend Bishop Demers arrived yesterday from Cowichan by the *Forward*. All accounts received give confirmation to the fact that mainly owing to the spiritual and moral influence, which the worthy Bishop exercises over the tribes in that neighborhood, amongst whom he is held in universal respect, the Indian murderers were surrendered and further disturbances happily averted."

Later on, in the troubles which the Canadian Pacific Railway encountered with the Indians, Father Lacombe was often called in as adjuster and peacemaker. But, as a rule, the Church has to work single handed and often under most adverse conditions. Their success is thus the more admirable.

It is claimed that Father Nobili, S.J., who, in 1846 and 1847, followed up Father Demers' very short passage in Caledonia, abolished the custom of burning the dead and of inflicting torments upon surviving wives. How this most inhuman practice could have continued year after year under the eyes of the white men in power at the forts, and of others who through a plea of marriage shared the life of the New Caledonia Indians, and often witnessed the awful torture but did not stop it, surpasses civilized intelligence. And yet, a rather timid missionary accomplished the deed. He also induced the natives to renounce all juggling and idolatry. So deeply was the good seed sown that though these people, once the most brutish, were left without spiritual help for twenty years, they kept the faith so that all are Catholics and there has never been a Protestant among them.

"One of the missionaries," writes Father Morice, O.M.I., in his "History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada," "describes the condition of the natives when he first met them in a state of immorality that would have put to the blush Sodom and Gomorrah, pagan Rome and Constantinople."

From those depths the missionaries worked with such a will that in 1861 Father Grandidier, O.M.I., wrote: "Governor Douglas did me the honor of a visit a few days ago. He told me the Indians (Port Hope on the Fraser) had never been so sober, and that he was very pleased with the change."

We are told by Mr. Brazeau that the "Kootenays" in the southwest "are really good Christians; truthful, brave, moral and so honest that if they find even the smallest thing, such as a penknife, or a piece of tobacco, they will bring it to the camp of the probable owner, and cry it up and down until it is claimed." The same gentleman considers that "to the west of the mountains the Roman Catholics have wrought a great work of reformation among the natives."

According to Father Fouquet, O.M.I., 1863: "Immoral unions between whites and Indian women are being discountenanced. The squaws are leaving the white men, and there is the greatest excitement."

In one place the missionaries report that "out of two thousand Indians, eighteen hundred took the pledge, and over sixteen hundred kept it."

*The Columbian*, New Westminster, says of Yale in 1866: "And here may be observed the happy fruits of the Romish missionaries, not only in the cleanliness and comfort observable among the Indians, but in the marked abstinence from drink and disorderly conduct."

Returning to Vancouver Island we have the following article in the *Colonist*, a daily published in Victoria since 1858: "After so much has been said by a distinguished clergyman calculated to mislead the enlightened public of Great Britain as to the influence of the Catholic religion among our aboriginal population, I am compelled, however reluctantly, to make a plain statement of facts. I reside in the district of Cowichan among about two thousand Indians who, eighteen months ago, carried on a system of drunkenness and murder too horrible to relate. At this date they may be said to be a reclaimed people. Drink is forbidden by them, and a penalty attached to drunkenness by order of their chiefs. Consequently, other crimes are rare.

"To what is all this owing? To the honest and persevering labors of a poor Catholic priest who receives no salary. Within eighteen months he has baptized upwards of two hundred and fifty children and fifty adults who can repeat the catechism in

their own language. Besides cutting timber, they have subscribed their dollars to build a substantial church, capable of containing four hundred people. Every Sabbath it is full to overflowing. I have seen hundreds standing in the rain to catch a sound of the priest's exhortations. I have seen over nine hundred clean-washed, well-dressed Indians in one of their own lodges. . . ."

The priest alluded to is the beloved Father Peter Rondeault who went to Cowichan in 1858.

Mr. Mathew Macfie in *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, has this fair article on the subject of the success of Catholic priests with the Indians: "Arriving at Cowichan one summer evening, about eight o'clock, in a canoe after a hard day's paddling, I heard the sound of chanting from the native church, which was erected and supplied with altar furniture chiefly, if not entirely, at the expense of the Indians. It was a log structure, about fifty by twenty feet, and on a high situation. At some distance from it, in front, a huge wooden Latin Cross stood in the ground, that emblem usually found in connection with Catholic mission stations. On entering the church I observed a *frère* [Anthony already mentioned] engaged in teaching some Indian lads hymns used in devotional exercises, which they sang with taste and vigor. On retiring, they were careful to sign themselves with the Cross.

"I visited the priest, Father Rondeau, who lived in a humble shanty adjoining the church. I could not fail to be struck at the exemplary self-forgetfulness he manifested in his arduous work. He had lived there for some years before white men settled in the locality; and notwithstanding the utter absence of comforts, and even scantiness of necessities that marked his lot, he seemed cheerful and contented.

"I learned that on Sundays hundreds of natives attended religious services; that monogamy was generally enforced by him with success and that in many other respects the morals of the people were correct. One case was told me of illicit whisky sellers who, attempting to land alcohol from their sloops, were driven off and their casks rolled into the sea."



The missionaries earned\* these successes by the sweat of their brows. Sometimes recognition was given from persons in positions of authority. For instance, when Father Grandidier, O.M.I., had been insulted and assaulted by saloonkeepers for his stand in the temperance cause, the Governor and Chief Justice Begbie and Judge P. O'Reilly went to congratulate him on the results of his campaign on behalf of temperance and civilization.

There is on file in St. Ann's Convent archives two letters from Governor A. J. Kennedy to Bishop Demers, one an invitation, the other an appreciation of meritorious Indian results:

August 19, 1864.

My dear Lord,

I have fixed Monday next at one o'clock to assemble the Indians at the Government offices and I would be glad to have the advantage of your presence on that occasion.

Faithfully yours,

A. J. KENNEDY.

The other followed three days later, August 22:

My dear Lord,

I assure you that I very much regret your unavoidable absence today, the more so as the Christian and forgiving spirit evinced by some of your converts would have been gratifying to you, as it was to me.

You were referred to personally by some of the chiefs in terms most creditable to you as a Christian minister.

I hope and believe that the meeting will result in good, and I thank you for your aid and advice in the matter.

Believe me to be

Faithfully yours,

A. J. KENNEDY.

As religion and civilization went forward, the missionaries who led in these paths of progress devised new schemes and methods for further advancement. One of these methods origi-

nated in the fertile brain of Father Lejeune, O.M.I. After 1867, the younger generation of Indians was beginning to attend industrial schools established by the Dominion Government, but the older folks had no opportunity of making up for past ignorance. The active Oblate thought of a quick and easy method to teach them to read, through shorthand. He adapted Duploye's system to his plan. He then got a blackboard on which to demonstrate the principles of the system. Of course he was as marvelous in teaching as in preaching. In an incredibly short time, the oldest Indians became enthused and soon learned how to read. Father Lejeune printed in shorthand the prayers, the hymns, the catechism and prayer book in the vocabulary of nine tribes; namely, Chinook, Stalo, Thompson, Lillooet, Okanagan, Shuswap, Squamish, Sheshal and Slayamen.

The compilation, most correctly named "Polyglot Manual," contains the same matter as above in English shorthand. The most complete collection is the Latin. With all the foregoing matter it has the Plain Chant, music for Royal Mass, for the funeral service, even for that of a child; all the liturgical church hymns; the litany of the Saints, etc. This polyglot manual was for devotions. For up-to-date information and entertainment the Father, who was ten in one, issued a shorthand Indian monthly called the *Wawa*.

Father Lejeune was the busiest missionary on the line but he did his journalistic work on trains or anywhere that he could snatch time.

A most extraordinary accomplishment of the Indians of the mainland about twenty-five years after the permanent residence of priests among them was the presentation of the Passion Play. An account of this thrilling performance is most absorbing especially to those engaged in dramatic clubs. The following is a description of the Play as it was enacted at Mission City on the Fraser, in the presence of a party of twenty bishops and priests and others interested in the colonization of Canada. The event took place June 22, 1892.

"At four o'clock in the afternoon, the announcement was

made that the play would begin. Two chiefs addressed the people in the encampment, ordering them to mass themselves at the foot of the hill. The Indians gathered like an army on the lowland, and at a given signal from the two chiefs, moved up the hill. Slowly they moved, chanting in Latin, 'Hail Jesus.' Their voices rose high and shrill, and died away in a low moan. At the crescendos the Indians would throw back their heads, and wave their arms in religious excitement.

"The procession as it slowly wended its way up the hill—true resemblance of Calvary—singing hymns in Chinook, passed by the tableaux—eight in number. Only the best among the Indians were chosen for parts.

"The first tableau presented a tall Indian kneeling in supplication; six gowned natives lay on the ground behind him, feigning sleep. The scene was the Agony. The Indian personating Christ threw his whole soul into the portrayal, and his face showed a wonderful expression of suffering and intercession.

"In the second scene, representing Christ seized by the soldiers, natives with the shields, spears, helmets and jerkins of Romans, bound the unresisting Saviour.

"The third tableau showed Christ standing before Pilate, with downcast eyes and bound in chains. A slave holding a basin and a pitcher, and a group of sullen, angry Jews watching the proceedings completed the realism of this affecting picture.

"The fourth station was the dreadful flagellation. It depicted two savage soldiers standing with bloody knouts upraised over the bound figure of Christ. His face showed anguish and spiritual determination.

"In the crowning of thorns that followed, the blood which trickled from the brow down the face of Christ, and stained His white garments, seemed so true that the spectator could not rid himself of the idea that it was not real.

"Fully as real was Christ bearing His cross, St. Veronica stepping forward to wipe His face, and two Indian soldiers compelling Him with blows to rise.

"In the seventh scene Christ comforts the weeping women of Jerusalem with a reassuring smile.

"From this spectacle the procession moved, singing softly, into the large mission yard. There on a platform on the edge of the cliff stood the Cross, a waxen figure of Christ was nailed to its arms, and clinging to the feet of the Crucified, and receiving the drops of blood on her head, was a Mary Magdalen. Beside her was the Blessed Mother. St. John, a handsome Squamish Indian, sat bowed in hopeless grief. Soldiers with swords and axes were grouped around the Cross, and one held the hyssop to the Sufferer's lips.

"As the chanting procession came before this last tableau, the singing was hushed and all silently fell on their knees. The stillness had become oppressive when five of the chiefs arose, and each in turn called out in his own language, 'Jesus is dying! Jesus is dying! Jesus is dying!'

"A shrill mournful chant, repeated over and over, and echoed from the cliffs across the river, was the reply. Then at a signal, all arose, and, filing past the crucifix, each made a deep reverence."

The press said, "It was the most wonderful and impressive sight ever witnessed in the North-West. It had all the grandeur and solemnity of a sacramental, and all the power and pathos of a tragedy. It was magnificent!"

Such was the amazing product of the combined efforts of cultured missionaries and raw Indians.

St. Mary's Mission founded on the Fraser in 1867 was like a capital for the Catholic Indian tribes in the territory. Here they held their great functions, first among which were Mass reunions at Easter and the procession in June. The reunions were ceremonious affairs. The arrival of the tribes was conducted on strict etiquette ceremonial. The Indians who lived nearest to St. Mary's arrived first and led in the honors extended to the parties that followed. The successive arrivals announced themselves with chants and songs. They were answered by gun salutes from the people on shore.

The debarkation was also carried on with stately dignity.



The chiefs, the captains and others in degree of importance walked two by two, hat in hand, from their canoes, up the hill to the front of the church. Here they shook hands with those who had preceded them, then entered the church for a short visit. As this formula was gone through at the arrival of each flotilla the whole ceremony took time. When all had arrived the natives formed quite a town, as there were always between fifteen hundred or two thousand present. It was a pretty sight at night to see the campfires lighted up in front of each tent.

The greatest demonstration of welcome was that accorded the priest with the farthest away and most numerous tribes who came from the mouth of the river, and even from Vancouver Island across the Gulf of Georgia. They came in such numbers that their compact canoes ascending the river looked like a moving island. Their oars kept time with the singing, flags and banners waved, salutes were shot at regular intervals. When they had landed the ceremony of handshaking commenced and lasted nearly an hour. Not one of the two thousand must be overlooked. Fortunately there was little probability for this to happen, as all were ranged, according to custom, in files. These reunions were a reproduction of the faithful who followed Our Lord. Like the disciples of old the Indians came from afar with scant provisions, and returned home when there were none left.

The Missionary Sister of St. Ann to whom we are indebted for this description goes on to say, "During these days of immense gatherings, a captain was appointed to wait upon the Sisters. His duty consisted in making a passage for them through the dense crowd, on their way to and from the church, and from their seats in the gallery to the altar railing to receive Holy Communion. He continued to fulfil his office until the last Indian group had left the week's celebration. When he came in presence of the Sisters he bowed respectfully, and having seen them to their places bowed again, hat lifted, and remained there standing till it was time to reconduct them to the Convent."

Who would recognize in this courtly attendant one born

and raised in ancestral savagery, and till the last fifteen years ignorant of civilization? How was the transformation made? Through the teaching of untiring missionaries.

They that are learned  
(in the law of God and true wisdom)  
shall shine as the brightness of the firmament,  
and they that instruct  
many to justice  
as stars for eternity.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII

---

### THE INVITATION HEEDED

**D**URING the year that Bishop Demers spent in St. Boniface as a young missionary, he had occasion to condole with Bishop Provencher over the coming and going of priests who could not stand the hardships of missionary life. It was now his turn to see the work in his own diocese hampered and its finances drained for the same reason. That this is a condition of pioneering the Church did not make the loss less keen.

Of the ten priests whom the Bishop had recruited in Europe, and the few who came from Canada in the space of five years, only two were left in 1857. And his flock was growing slowly, steadily. In need of priests, of funds and of religious educators, the Bishop went to eastern Canada in 1857 in the hope of obtaining all three. He returned with three priests—Father Peter Rondeault, Father Vary and Father Beaudry, C.V.—Mr. Charles Michaud in minor orders, Mr. Thibodeau and a lay brother, the last three members of the Clercs of St. Viateur, and four Sisters of St. Ann.

Father Rondeault and the pioneer sisters persevered in a long and useful life, until crowned with age and merit they passed from the land of their adoption to that of a blessed eternity. Father Vary remained in the diocese less than two years. The Clercs were withdrawn after some four or five years to give their services to more populous fields. Perhaps their loss has never been repaired. Each was superior in his sphere, and, being members of a teaching congregation, they were all excellent teachers. With that they lent a helping hand in every way.

Brother Michaud stands out as the architect of the first cathedral in Victoria. To estimate the correctness of the architecture of this little cathedral one need only know that the

gifted brother was chosen as architect for St. James Cathedral in Montreal, a replica of St. Peter's in Rome, reduced to a sixth. The Victoria Cathedral was built on Humboldt Street. It was dedicated to the Apostle St. Andrew because of Bishop Demers' consecration on that feast.

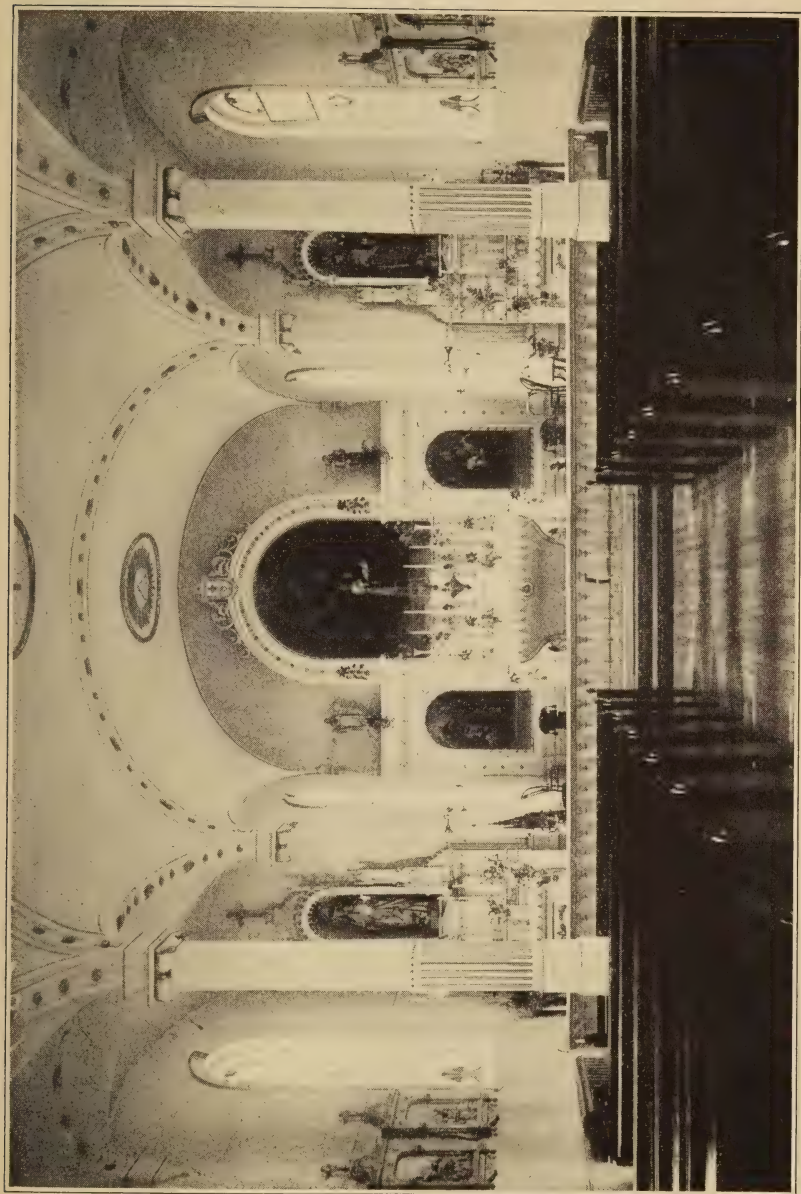
Although it was to be a wooden structure and only seventy-five by thirty feet it grew slowly. Its initial stage was in the collection taken up by the Sisters of St. Ann a few weeks after their arrival from Montreal. Sister Mary Conception, accompanied by Mrs. Captain Doane, presented herself one day at the Hudson's Bay Fort and made request for a church contribution. Chief Factor Douglas opened the subscription list with one hundred dollars. Other illustrious names in and out of the Fort followed.

At some little distance outside the Fort, a man was making a sidewalk in front of his house. Upon learning the object of the Sister's appeal, he put his hand into his pocket and without a word passed three five dollar gold pieces to her. The man was Mr. Carroll, from whose charities to the Nuns later ensued a lawsuit which stretched over a quarter of a century. Besides what they were able to collect in Victoria the Sisters passed over to the building fund the private offerings slipped into their hands at their departure from loved ones in their Eastern home land.

The lumber for the church came from San Francisco and cost seventy-five dollars per thousand. The pews of native red pine were made and presented by Mr. Forbes. The bishop, the priest and the brothers put much pious, loving labor into the work. Anyone who sees the decorations of the Cathedral now, 1939, the chapel of St. Ann's Academy, will be as incredulous as surprised to learn that the ornamentation, including its one hundred and seventy-two rosettes, is all handmade. This is sufficient to account for the fact that though the foundations were laid in the fall of 1858, the Cathedral was dedicated only on July 18, 1861.

The Cathedral has the unusual record of having seen the consecration of three bishops—Bishop Louis d'Herbomez,





CHAPEL OF ST. ANN'S ACADEMY, VICTORIA, B. C.

Erected as St. Andrew's Cathedral, by Most Reverend Modeste Demers, in 1858. Annexed to St. Ann's Academy in 1886



O.M.I., 1864; Bishop Charles John Seghers, 1873; Bishop J. B. Brondel, 1879. The first priest ordained within its walls was its architect, Father Michaud.

From the beginning the church in Victoria enjoyed singing of a very high order. The offices in the sanctuary were enhanced by bishops and priests gifted with remarkable voices. The voices of the laity were equally good, and small as the congregation was, it had the reputation of having the best choir on the coast. The choir sang to the accompaniment of the veriest of small organs. The instrument had only four octaves, but when these were manipulated by a musician with a soul, and there were quite a few such musicians, the little organ sent forth a volume of melody. Dear, sacred little organ, it may be seen with its yellow aged keys in St. Ann's Museum, silently witnessing to missionary days.

After twenty-five years the Cathedral became too small to accommodate the Catholic residents of Victoria. A new one was erected on the corner of View and Blanchard Streets. The old one was passed over to the Sisters of St. Ann in recognition of their early contribution and generous service. To make the transaction legal the Sisters paid one dollar for it. In 1886, it was rolled over from the north side of Humboldt Street to the property of the Sisters on the south. The building was very much shaken by years and by the transportation, but being renovated, it is still a precious relic.

The four nuns who formed the third group that responded to Bishop Demers' request for helpers in the North-West Pacific belonged, as has been noted, to the Community of the Sisters of St. Ann. They were members of an organization founded on the three religious vows, poverty, chastity and obedience, whose aim, chiefly educational, included, where necessity required, the care of the sick and of orphans.

Nuns for missionary work were not easily obtainable at that period of construction in eastern Canada. Institutions of every kind were developing in cities and hamlets, claiming the energies of social leaders and co-operators. The Bishop, therefore, went to one religious community after another, with his

request for missionary workers, only to return weary and footsore to his host, Bishop Ignatius Bourget, with a disappointing report of his fruitless appeal.

One evening, at the end of another such day, it occurred to Bishop Bourget to mention the new Institute of St. Ann's that had come into being recently, and had then its headquarters at St. Jacques de Montcalm. He advised the Bishop to apply there, saying, "It is a young, fervent community."

The Bishop went. There was no need for him to search further. His proposal, the most important ever considered by the community even to the present, was submitted to the members. Acceptance meant exile across Canada to its western ocean boundary; its mission was to Christianize, and by that to civilize the Indians and half-breeds, and otherwise to exercise charity as need should arise. Its means of support—trust in Providence.

The Sisters were asked to vote by secret ballot. The return in favor of acceptance was fifty-nine to one. The poorest order in the country had not hesitated to take upon itself to work in the poorest diocese in the world. The departure was fixed for April 14, 1858. Among so many willing subjects the problem was not whom to choose, but how. The Holy Ghost inspired the choice of four sisters who carried benediction in all they did, wherever they went, during half a century in British Columbia: Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, the humble Superior; Sister Mary Angele, ex-Superior General, who laid it down that she should never again fill the post of superior; Sister Mary Lumena, who carried the fruit of an active mind, busy hands and a peaceful disposition to her Creator in the eightieth year of her life; Sister Mary Conception, who met all the events of her span of eighty-nine years with the calm, fearless, energetic character of Irish parentage who had suffered for the faith.

The voyage lasted nearly two months. Still it was a great improvement on those made by the Bishop with the brigades, or around Cape Horn. The passengers traveled in all the comfort of modern steamships; first, from New York to Panama, then across the isthmus by rail and from there on, north on the



Pacific. The journal kept by the Sisters has this entry: "From New York to our final destination we traveled on four steamboats. On the first there were five hundred passengers; on the second, seven hundred; on the third, fifteen hundred; and on the fourth, five hundred."

The question asked among the passengers was "Where are you going?"

"To the California gold mines," answered some.

"To the Cariboo gold mines," answered others.

See how much the word "gold" is esteemed, but God—salvation—Ah!

"Are you going to California?" they asked of the Sisters.

"No, we are going to Vancouver Island," was their reply.

"Is there, then, gold on that Island?"

These gold-fevered people could not grasp motives other than the seeking of gold. The betterment of the classes through education or religion was not their concern.

The American General Winfield Scott, who had captured the city of Mexico, 1847, was one of the passengers bound for San Francisco. His courtesy and that of the other passengers show how wise the Sisters' decision had been to travel in their religious garb. (It had been thought prior to their leaving Catholic Canada that the religious habit would have exposed the nuns to disrespect, but the sequel proved quite the contrary.)

At San Francisco the Sisters received hospitality from the good Sisters of Mercy. Their Superior was Mother Russell, a sister to the great English Jurist of Irish birth, Sir Charles Arthur Russell. During the many days the Sisters had spent on deck on the long ocean voyage, their black veils had become rather greenish and shabby under the tropical sun. This did not matter to them who were coming to a pioneer country, but it did to the paternal Bishop, who advised them to buy new ones of lighter material. "We know," adds the narrator, "that we need have no anxiety for our wants with a protector who notices such minutiae. We also learned that even saints are not indifferent to personal appearance."

About the end of May the Bishop's party took passage from Panama on the *Seabird* that was to carry them to the harbor of Victoria, via Portland, Oregon. All went on placidly until they had crossed the bar in the Columbia River. But here, at Astoria, as the boat came up the river, a party of citizens met them in a rowboat, came on board, and made directly for the Sisters.

Addressing them heartily they said, "Sisters, we are so glad you are here. You must stay with us. We will not let you go to that savage Vancouver Island where you have nothing to start with. Here we have a little convent and a school all ready for your accommodation, and we promise you our support."

The speakers were a delegation of prominent citizens from Portland who had hurried this far to persuade the Sisters to stay with them. The ladies and gentlemen were in earnest. Their offer was enticing, the advantages both present and future beyond anything to be hoped for farther north.

The poor Bishop stood by taking it all in. Alas, were his efforts doomed to disappointment at the moment that they were so near fulfillment? Almost piteously he said, "Sisters, will you leave me now?"

Sister Mary Angele answered, "My Lord, we will follow you to the end."

The good Bishop never forgot that act of renunciation of a grand opportunity. Not that the Sisters viewed the act as a renunciation, for they were going to Vancouver Island under the Divine order of religious obedience and the thought of swerving from their purpose never occurred to them; but they had been put in the painful position of refusing a most generous offer from sincere, well-meaning people.

The Sisters arrived in Victoria, Saturday, June 5, 1858. It is said that people do not die of seasickness. There must be truth in the saying, since Sister Mary Lumena suffered so much from it all the time that they were at sea, that she actually lived on water and was a mere skeleton when she arrived at the journey's end. But she revived and the following day began

her missionary work by talking about God to the children whom curiosity had attracted to the cabin convent.

As the Bishop led the Sisters through the path from the landing to his residence on the day of their arrival, he said, "I do not know if there will be anything for us to eat."

And that was their introduction to their new life. But God saw to it that their lives were of more value than those of

—the birds of the air  
for they neither sow nor reap  
nor gather into barns;  
and your heavenly Father  
feedeth them.

And so it was that He had provided. On their arrival at the house they found a choice, substantial repast spread for them. This delicate and practical attention came from the first lady of the land, the wife of Chief Factor Douglas. It was the first link in a chain of benefactions to the Sisters in Victoria which extended through her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

After the evening meal the Bishop led the way across the street and the two lots to the cabin on Heywood Avenue. The priests followed, each carrying a load of luggage, mattresses, etc. On arriving at the door of the dilapidated shelter, the Bishop stood alongside the boulder that served as steps to the entry, and said, "Sister Superior and Sisters, take possession of your abode." Each bowed and passed in.

The mattresses were laid on the floor, the Sisters hung up their aprons for curtains in the broken windows and they tidied up what they could. Their life on western shores had begun.

Mention must be made of two young lay women who, when the Sisters were leaving Montreal, offered their services to the cause on the simple condition of being provided with board and clothing. One of them took sick on the way. By the time the party reached Portland she was in a dying condition. Sorrowfully, the Sisters had to leave her there. She died a few days after the northward voyage was resumed.

The other, Miss Mary Mainville, always remained with the Sisters. She rendered incalculable service. Her chief charge was the nursery for foundlings. She was fairly worshipped by the little ones and yet she never spoiled them. She was discreet and even astute in the many errands with which she was entrusted. She received many offers of marriage, as good wives were at a premium in those pioneer times, but her suitors received no encouragement. It is said that proposals were made to Miss Mary even when she was whitewashing the convent fence. This was too much. Though none but the most respectable would dare approach the exclusive Miss Mary, she threw down her whitewash brush and left the job to others.

After nineteen years of wonderful service, Miss Mary may have been forgiven a fit of homesickness. She yielded to it and returned to her native land but not without having long debated with herself as to the wisdom of turning from a semi-vocation. On the part of the sisterhood, too, her going was considered a loss. But in the face of new conditions where she was not so much needed for errands of trust, nor for the nursery, it may be that her usefulness in the west was past. Be that as it may, she was quite content in her life with the Sisters at the Mother House.

The thirty-foot log cabin in which the Sisters were installed was divided by a partition. One part was used as a kitchen, a laundry, a dining room; the other, as a classroom, parlor and Sisters' living room. The beds were in the attic.

Providence blessed the work from the very first day in sending them an orphan to care for. She was a miserable, sickly, little half-breed girl who died after a few years. The Sisters taught and visited the sick, and the school grew.

When the Bishop had gone east the year before, the Fort was going the even tenor of its way, and white settlers were slowly coming into the country. The urgent need of the Catholic Bishop was to procure religious teachers for the generation of half-breed youth. While he was away, gold had been discovered on the Fraser, and, as usual, at the word "gold" people lost their heads. There was a mad rush to the reputed gold



fields. Victoria was the depot for the final outfitting of adventurers.

When the Bishop returned with missionary recruits in 1858, he found Victoria a city of thirty thousand tents. When the gold-seekers shortly came back from the mainland much poorer than when they had gone in, quite a number became residents along the way, and on Vancouver Island. St. Ann's school and staff had to be enlarged in consequence and their interests widened to provide education for the children of the new residents.

In 1859, two Sisters came—one of them a German, the other, an Irish woman. Sister Mary Bonsecours was, as circumstances required, a teacher of music, in charge of the orphans, a visitor of the sick, a cook, a farmer, a superior, a hospital nurse. She went from one occupation to the other quite naturally, and filled each with pleasant ardor. In old age when nearly blind, after more than fifty years of charming, useful service, she went to end her days in prayer at the Mother House.

Her traveling companion, on the westward journey, Sister Mary Providence, was the greatest gift that could be bestowed on missionary work in British Columbia. As Sister Mary Angele, the ex-Superior General, said, "All good things came to us with her. Though only twenty-two years of age she was appointed superior, and held the position twenty-two consecutive years; after that she alternated in superiorship between the hospital and the Convent, until her death in 1904.

She, indeed, filled the meaning of her name which, however, through God's designs, was bestowed upon her through mistake. The name, Sister Mary Providence, was to have been given to the Sister who was with her in the Holy Habit reception ceremony. She was to have received the name of Rose by request of Lady Harwood, who found the name appropriate for the fresh, rosy novice of sixteen. Through some confusion, the names were exchanged and so remained.

Sister Mary Providence lived a life of faith, of strong executive ability and of broad charity. Her wise counsel was sought

far and wide to solve difficulties of every kind. There was a young married woman, not of the faith, who came to her in tears one day. "My husband is so displeased with me that he threatens to leave me. What can I do?"

"My dear little woman, become a good cook and feed him well. You know the way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

The little wife acted accordingly and raised a happy family. There was also the merchant whose bookkeeper skipped, leaving the books in a tangle that no expert accountant could straighten out. Someone said, "Go to the convent, and we guarantee that Sister Mary Providence will steer you through." The merchant brought his books. In less than an hour he walked away "on air"; everything had been made clear.

Many girls who wanted to begin a new, clean life brought their problems to her. With utmost ease she found openings for them, did the necessary correspondence, made all arrangements so that there was nothing for the applicant to do but to take passage for the new haven.

Then there was her catechetical mission. So well was it known, that when a young fiancée on the Sound wanted to become a Catholic prior to her marriage, the priest said to her, "If you wish to be thoroughly instructed go to Sister Mary Providence in Victoria." The young girl did so at much cost. When she was duly prepared, the wedding took place from the Convent.

Sister Mary Providence entered into everyone's needs. A lady who had known better days was by force of misfortune reduced to becoming a housekeeper. She did not complain, but the work told on her health. Sister Mary Providence said to her, "Come here every Wednesday." She did, and always received a box of fresh eggs and some brandy with the injunction, "Make yourself an egg-nog; you need it to keep up your strength in your unaccustomed work." When the lady explained to the doctor, in whose house she was engaged, about the eggs and the liquor, he said, "It is just like Sister Mary Providence to do that."

As for the great nun her left hand never knew what her right hand did. Of her executive ability the lawyers used to say, "It is of no use trying anything against her, and her lawyer."

God's Providence did choose thee, queenly soul,  
To lay foundation deep of structure fair.  
St. Ann's in Western fields, Thy soul He dowered  
With faith and hope, and love, and insight rare!

The log convent that had been enlarged to treble its size soon became inadequate and a two-story brick building was erected on View Street. But progress called for a larger building still. The new Convent was built on the present Humboldt Street site in 1871. The building has been added to at both ends, so that at the present writing it presents a frontage of about three hundred feet, and is set in spacious grounds. That is now. In 1860 the Sisters' School was the object of complimentary envy.

In October, Bishop Hill, a recently appointed Anglican Bishop, published in the *Victoria Colonist* letters which he had addressed to his Commissary in England. Among other things he said, "I think it likely I may have trouble from the Romanists. At present they are not strong. They are, however, forward in the matter of education both in the cases of boys and girls. I am anxious to find a good man to take the leadership of a collegiate institution. It will be well supported, I doubt not. Boys of the upper class go at present to the Roman Catholic Bishop's school where he engages not to teach religion. The case is urgent.

"It is quite true that the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy (Sisters of St. Ann) are the only persons here engaged in the education of girls of the better class, and our church people send their children to them. They have recently opened a second establishment in the town, their first being situated a short way out.

"The only way of meeting them is by a female college, or upper class school, for the daughters of merchants and profes-

sional people. The whole question of female agency is most important in order to prevent the sapping of the very life blood of the future population with unsound religion and infidelity."

Bishop Demers expressed himself as grateful for Bishop Hill's appreciation of Catholic education even though the latter feared its effects on the future population of the city.

Bishop Cridge of the Reformed Church, who came to Victoria in 1854, was ever the friend of the Catholic Bishop and of the Sisters of St. Ann. He was present in 1904 at the reception tendered Sister Mary Providence on her fiftieth anniversary of religious profession. It was a beautiful picture to see the venerable Bishop come forward to pay his respects to the Jubilarian nun, and she rising with gracious dignity to receive them.

One of the Sisters who had formerly belonged to his church visited him occasionally in his old age. She never left without singing the hymn so dear to him: "Abide with Me, Fast Falls the Eventide."

As for the Sisters of St. Ann they have proved worthy of the advertisement contained in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, August 31, 1859: "Bishop Demers' school opens on Thursday. From the high character which it bears, it deserves every encouragement."



---

## CHAPTER XIX

---

### MARTYR BISHOPS OF VICTORIA DIOCESE

**A**RCHBISHOP CHARLES JOHN SEGHERS and Bishop John Nicholas Lemmens, whose zeal for God's glory brought an untimely death to each, hold the first place in the Honor Roll of Vancouver Island missionaries. Archbishop Seghers was born in Belgium but he gave his allegiance early to the Island diocese. He was twenty-four years old and had been ordained but three months when he arrived at Victoria, November 17, 1863. His first act was one of devotion to his bishop. Noticing the prelate's worried looks he inquired the cause. "It is money worry," frankly answered Bishop Demers. "If that is all," said Father Seghers, "I can help you." He had a private fortune.

But Father Seghers' greatest fortune was within himself—his intellect, his ardor for souls, his amenity with his neighbor. He spoke the principal European languages, and acquired those of the Indians so easily that he said, when complimented on the fact, "There is no merit in me for that, they come almost naturally."

The library in the Victoria episcopal residence, consisting of hundreds of Latin folios, the works of the Fathers of the Church, accumulated in great part by him, are proof of his refined and extensive scholarship. He was an orator and a musician. Little wonder that the Bishop writing about him to the Rector of the American College of Louvain, where Father Seghers had completed his theological studies, said, "My Seghers is the idol of the people."

However, all his faculties were intellectual; he was perfectly at sea to extricate himself from ordinary difficulties. Once when walking from Chemainus to Cowichan, he got lost in a

snowstorm. His boots got so clogged with snow that walking with them became impossible. In the morning he arrived at the Convent in his stocking feet, his boots slung over his shoulders. The Sister who received him, took the boots and knocked them together. The accumulated snow dropped off the heels.

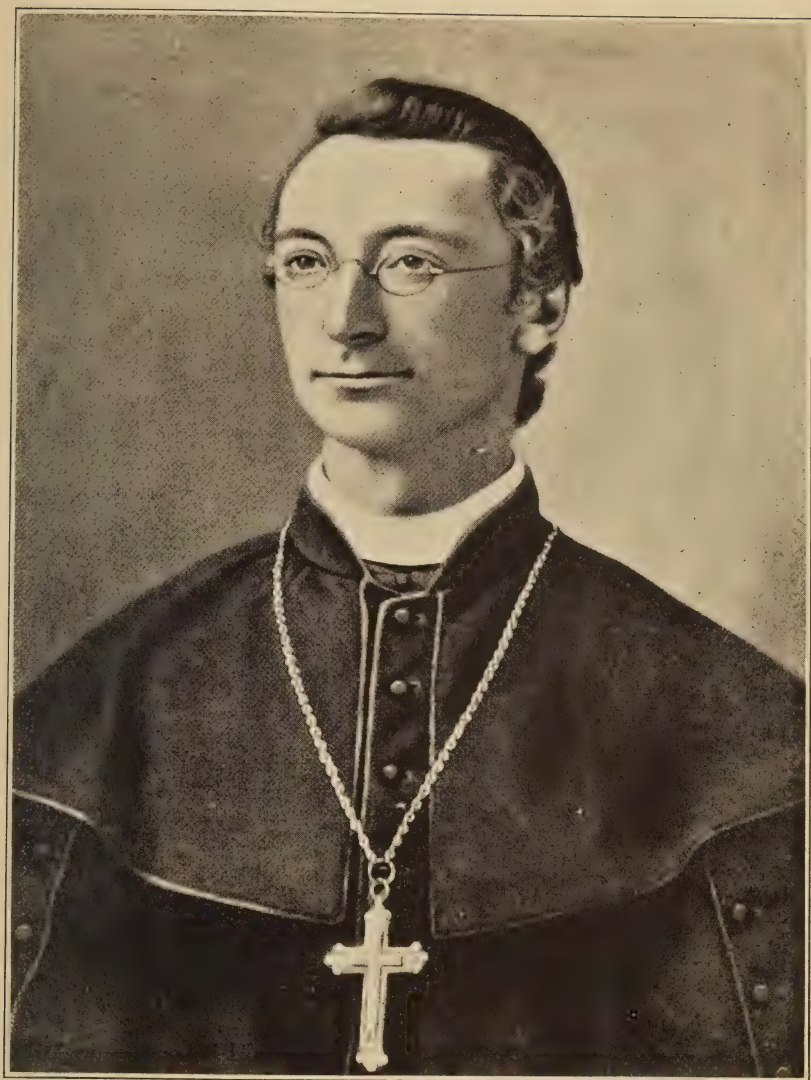
Father remarked, "It is all so simple; if I had only thought of that."

Father Seghers' ministry was chiefly exercised at the Cathedral at Victoria. In 1869 he accompanied Bishop Demers to the Vatican Council in Rome. The Bishop, much concerned over the state of health of the young priest who was threatened with consumption, asked Pius IX to bestow a special blessing on him. The improvement in his health was remarkable, and before long all symptoms of the dreaded disease disappeared. Ever afterwards he enjoyed perfect health.

But they were scarcely back in Victoria when Bishop Demers, who for months had felt his own death approaching, passed away July 28, 1871. It soon became evident that Father Seghers would fill the vacant See, all the more since Father Morrison, a Canadian priest of high merit, had declined the position on account of ill health. It was, therefore, with great joy that the public heard of Father Seghers' appointment, and assisted at his episcopal consecration on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul in 1873.

Bishop Seghers continued the development of the Church begun by his able predecessor. He located missionaries among the fierce tribes on the west coast of the Island and Alberni, and Nanaimo. He also placed resident priests in southern Alaska. Father Althoff was first stationed in Wrangel, but when its settlement declined with the discovery of gold mines in Juneau, he located him at the new mining town. The Cassiar mines, as well as Douglas Island, fell under his care. Later Sitka became Father Heynen's portion.

At this time all the territory of Alaska was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Victoria. It was Bishop Seghers' concern to make a thorough visitation of the country. Accordingly on June 8th, 1877, he left with Father Mandart on the



Most Reverend Charles John Seghers, Archbishop of  
Victoria, B. C. Martyr-Apostle of Alaska





expedition that was to last sixteen months. They went by the outside route, that is to San Francisco, then North to Bering Sea and up the Yukon River. They made their headquarters at Nulato.

The Victoria priests knew that Bishop Seghers' zeal ignored human limitations; so before he left, they took Father Mandart aside and said, "You are responsible for the Bishop's health; see that he does not overdo it."

Father Mandart acquitted himself well of the task. Often he would lie doggedly rolled up in his blankets or refuse to move. He knew just when to time these apparent fakes in order to conserve his Superior's strength. When they both returned to Victoria safe and well, Bishop said, "I was disappointed in Father Mandart. He was not as courageous as I thought." Father Mandart smiled knowingly and his confrères tapped him on the back.

During the solitary months spent in Alaska the missionaries had received little or no news, so what was Bishop Seghers' consternation when the Alaska boat touched the San Francisco dock to hear someone from the wharf, shout out: "Bishop Seghers, you are named Coadjutor Archbishop of Oregon." What chilling news just when he was throbbing with the joy of being back! He hoped it was not true. But it was.

It was a sorrowful day for Victorians when Archbishop Seghers left for his new position at the end of June, 1879. The remark was made that he had the distinction of replacing the two pioneer bishops on the northwest Pacific Coast, Archbishop F. N. Blanchet and Bishop M. Demers. It was certainly an honor decreed upon him by divine dispensation. He was replaced in Victoria by Bishop J. B. Brondel.

Both as Bishop of Victoria and as Archbishop of Oregon, he contributed the accounts of his travels to the *Catholic Sentinel*, published in Portland. They make interesting and instructive reading. Engaged in his episcopal duties he went the length and breadth of Oregon. On one occasion he was taken for a tramp and given something to eat quite apart. Somehow while he was eating his Pectoral Cross came into view. The family

exclaimed, "A bishop!" Immediately he was given a place of honor.

In 1883, the Archbishop went to Rome with the other bishops of the American hierarchy called to discuss the problems of their approaching Council in Baltimore. A few days after the first reunion Archbishop Seghers had an interview with Cardinal Simeoni. The Vicariate Apostolic of Montana had just been erected into a Bishopric with Bishop Brondel of Victoria as incumbent. There was question, therefore, of appointing a successor for the Victoria Diocese.

The Cardinal consulted the Archbishop. "What shall we do with Alaska?"

"That is simple enough, Your Eminence," answered the Archbishop, "Send me back to Victoria. I will look after Alaska and continue the work I began there in 1878. If they say, 'Who shall we send? Who will go?' I am ready to say, 'Here I am. Send me.'"

"And you would give up the Archdiocese which you administer so well?"

"Certainly, if I am assured that the Pope approves and blesses my purpose."

The Cardinal told the Archbishop to speak about it to the Holy Father, but Archbishop Seghers asked him to find out what His Holiness thought about it. Upon the promise of the Cardinal that he would do so, Archbishop set in writing his motives, and almost urged their acceptance by citing the example of St. Leivin and St. Boniface who both resigned their archbishoprics to go to barbarous countries for the salvation of souls. This exposition was presented to the Holy Father. A few days later the Archbishop was called to an audience with him.

"How long were you Bishop of Victoria?" asked the Sovereign Pontiff.

"Six years, Holy Father, but I was sixteen years in its missions. Your Holiness knows that I offered myself to my former diocese."

"Cardinal Simeoni told me a word about it. Have you had difficulties with your Oregon clergy?"

"None."

"Whom would you propose to succeed you?"

The Archbishop answered, "I have not considered it a question to be solved by me. The Bishops of the province could propose a candidate."

"You love your former diocese very much," said the Pope kindly.

The Archbishop said, "I do love it, but what is moving me to act as I have, is the following consideration; Oregon is a prosperous state which it would be easy to supply with an archbishop, while finding some one for Vancouver Island would be difficult, since Father Jonckau, the only person the bishops recommended, has refused the post on account of ill health. I am perfectly disposed to remain metropolitan of Oregon, and if I thought Your Holiness did not approve of my proposal, I would not for a moment think of changing dioceses.

"When I left Vancouver Island to be Archbishop of Oregon I did so with much regret, but willingly, because I saw the will of God in that of the Holy See. Now I look to the Holy See for the will of God."

Leo XIII was greatly touched by this Christian and admirable apostolic spirit. The Archbishop during the interview noticed that the Pope's eyes were moist, and that he frequently compressed his lips as if to control his emotion. With the simple and impressive majesty which marked Leo XIII he said these two words, "I approve."

The Archbishop wrote, "Impossible to describe my feelings at that solemn moment. My sacrifice was accepted. My offer had received the highest possible sanction; that of the blessing of the Holy Father, the strongest proof that my offer accords with God's will."

Returning to America he passed through his native land, everywhere lecturing in favor of the Alaska missions. People in the Old World are particular. The press was shocked that

the Archbishop so far forgot his dignity as to lecture in the Alaskan parki.<sup>1</sup> When the Archbishop was told about it, he answered logically that the costume was no travesty, but the very attire he wore on his northern journey. "If it is considered unbecoming for me to wear in Belgium what I do in Russian America for the salvation of souls, I shall not do so any more."

After attending the Council of Baltimore, which was conducted with such pomp as could only be surpassed in Rome, and after closing his affairs in Oregon, Archbishop Seghers reentered his Vancouver diocese. It was April, 1885.

Archbishop Seghers spent the year revisiting the diocese—the west coast, southern Alaska and the stations nearer headquarters. By resigning his archbishopric in Oregon, he had descended to the rank of bishop. But Rome did not let that last. His Holiness sent him the pallium for his Victoria incumbency. It was conferred on him May 30, 1886. Six weeks afterwards, July 13th, he took passage on the *Ancon* for the great Alaska trip, which for him was to have no return. Two Jesuits, Father Tosi and Father Robaut, were with him. They were the foundation stones of the central Alaskan missions. A fourth man in the party was John Fuller, who had volunteered free service as factotum, a post for which he was well-fitted. During his short stay in Victoria while the last preparations for the trip were being made, he served Mass at the Convent, went about with downcast eyes and with his rosary hung about his neck. Somehow, this outward devotion seemed overdone, but all were too concerned over the Archbishop's going to comment on it. When a lady, women are keen, remarked upon these externals, wondering why the Archbishop tolerated them, she checked herself saying, "The Archbishop is too great a man to notice such trifles."

Unfortunately, this was too true. The outward show of religion hid the heart of an irascible, gloomy, sullen character—the heart of one who had known murder, and was to know it

<sup>1</sup> The parki is the outer garment of fur with hood attached worn by natives and missionaries alike during the long cold winter months in Alaska.



again. Pious appearances cannot long be kept under control. This soon became evident in Fuller's case.

This time the trip to Alaska was made by the "inside" passage across the Alaskan mountains to the headwaters of the Yukon, then down this river to Nulato. At the confluence of the Stewart and Yukon Rivers, however, the Archbishop decided to leave the two Jesuits to take charge of that district, while he would go down the Yukon to Nulato with Fuller. The Jesuits, who by this time knew Fuller's evil tendencies, objected, saying, "Let Father Robaut go with you and Fuller stay with Father Tosi."

The Archbishop did not think it fair to separate the two brethren in religion. He started off September 8th on the 1,075 mile trip down the Yukon, with the wicked, semi-insane Fuller. Instead of improving on the way under the kind influence of the Archbishop, Fuller only became more intractable. The climax was reached at Nuklukayet, where a man named Walker kept a store. The storekeeper saw with apprehension that the teaching of a missionary would injure his illicit trade with the Indians. To further his own ends he fanned the furious feeling of Fuller and hinted broadly at his doing away with the Archbishop. Fuller lost no time in carrying the hint into effect.

In the early morning of November 27th, when the travelers were only a day's journey from Nulato, the Archbishop was still lying wrapped in his buffalo robe on the floor of the abandoned hut where the party had spent the night. One guide occupied a corner of the hut, the other was outside getting ice to be melted. Suddenly Fuller took up his rifle and called out to the Archbishop, "Get up!" Dazed, the prelate arose. He had time only to see the rifle pointed at him. Instinctively he bowed his head and crossed his arms on his breast. The shot flashed. A bullet pierced the great heart of the missionary who had given his forty-seven years of life to the knowledge, the service and the love of God.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, Father Jonckau, the administrator, was anxious. He said, "Something is wrong, otherwise the

Archbishop would find some means of letting us hear from him."

It was eight months before news of the tragedy reached civilization. Two years after the murder on November 15th, 1888, the mortal remains were, at last, brought to Victoria, on the United States cutter, *Thetis*.

Truly he is the martyr-apostle of Alaska.

Dreamer of souls! Look afar!—and list!

Hearest the stirring call?

"The Call of the North." Here are souls, are souls!  
Save them from Satan's thrall.

Seeker of souls! Thou hast heard the call,

Yet whither leads yonder trail?

Towards Him Who hath sentried the Northern Star  
To brighten the Yukon vale!

"The heavens are telling the glory of God,"

Then Voice of the North Wind, sing!

And seeker of souls, press on, press on,

He beckons,—the Christ, your King!

"Miriam"—S .S. A.

Bishop John Nicholas Lemmens was a worthy successor to Archbishop Seghers. He, too, was destined to be a martyr to his zeal. Not in the shedding of his blood as a victim of religious hatred, it is true, but by the giving of his life in the exercise of charity in distant Guatemala in 1897.

Bishop Lemmens had obtained permission to leave his diocese to collect funds to reduce the debt on his newly-built cathedral in Victoria, B. C. He went to Central America and was heartily welcomed in Guatemala where the bishop, enfeebled by age and infirmity, had not been able to make the visitation of his diocese for some time. Bishop Lemmens substituted for him, administering the Sacrament of Confirmation



MOST REVEREND JOHN NICHOLAS LEMMENS  
Bishop of Victoria—1888–1897





and strengthening the flock. This work was the easier for him as he had already learned Spanish. In return for his pastoral ministrations he received candles from the poor people. These he turned into cash. As he said, "It was slow work making a dollar with candles."

In the course of his difficult journeys he heard of some Indians at Peten who had long been neglected. Indians! That name stirred his heart. The region was fever infested, and he, with his weak constitution, went, caught the fever and died at the home of a noble Signor at Coban.

Bishop Lemmens' early call to the missionary apostolate had first inclined him to the Chinese mission field, but his father opposed his zealous ambition because of the reports of persecution in the Orient. The next most arduous field was the diocese of Vancouver Island and Alaska. Surely that was far enough and had pagan savages enough to satisfy the zeal of any priest. To Vancouver Island he came in 1876.

At the American College of Louvain where Bishop Lemmens prepared for missionary work, the faculty and the students were of one accord in saying, first, that he sang like an angel, and second (what was not so apparent), that he would some day be bishop. This prevision became fact on August 5, 1888, when the ardent missionary was elevated to the See of Vancouver Island. Had his teachers and Seminarian companions seen him officiate in the sanctuary either as priest or as bishop, they would have said, "He not only sings like an Angel, but says Mass like an Angel."

Five days after Father Lemmens' first landing in Victoria, British Columbia, he set out to begin his new mission apostolate at the coal mining town of Nanaimo. At the same time, his traveling companion from Europe to Victoria, Father Nicolaye, boarded a schooner for the West Coast Indian missions. No time was ever lost on sightseeing. The harvest was too ripe for easy-going harvesters.

In Nanaimo, Father Lemmens' only dependable congregation was made up of two old men who never approached the Sacraments, and three Sisters of St. Ann. Nevertheless, the

scholarly priest gave Sunday sermons which were as well prepared as if to be given before a large congregation. When one of the sisters asked him why he took such care for so few people, he answered, "It is my duty to preach, as it is that of Catholics to come to church; if they fail in their duty it is no reason why I should in mine."

On another occasion the same sister was the witness of an equally admirable trait. For a long time Father Lemmens lodged in the sacristy of his poor little church. His cot was placed in an adjoining fireless part. One Sunday he became seriously ill and the doctor was sent for. Meanwhile, his mattress was laid on the floor of the sacristy where there was a fireplace. The room was too small for the cot. The best that could be done was miserable and the sister who was fixing up things said, "Father, do you not feel ashamed to have the doctor see you on the floor like this?" He answered in that simple, quiet, natural way of his, "A priest should never be ashamed of poverty."

In everything the good priest was sincerity itself; even his eyes expressed the candor of childhood. He was moreover a living example of St. James' text, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

Was it these qualities that drew youth to him, so that some of them said, "It is bliss for us to be near him"? And yet, he was the most unassuming, and undemonstrative person one could meet. His whole personality was something indefinable.

Missionary life was diversified. From Nanaimo, Father Lemmens attended to the people in nearby Wellington every Sunday, and to the Comox settlement at a distance of about 70 miles three times a year. By this time the Indians who had made such a showing with Bishop Demers twenty-one years before were nil, but the tribes to the north of the island claimed his attention. In 1882, after six years of such missionary work, Father Lemmens was appointed rector at the Cathedral in Victoria. Here his early predilection for the Indians prevailed, so he gave much of his time to the native children of the wilds in Sooke, Beecher Bay and Nitinat in the vicinity of Victoria.

In 1883, he went to the West Coast Indians. While there he had an experience of Indian treachery which nearly brought about his death. He was accustomed to circulate freely among the several tribes on Barclay Sound. Human nature there, as elsewhere, provided its domestic disagreements, its desertions. It happened that a young mother ran away from her husband. The husband's name is interesting, "Hatasay." The missionary who held implied authority to act as Justice of the peace, went with a native policeman (called Napoleon, if you please), to settle the question. Father Lemmens surmised that the runaway had gone to her father, Hayopee. This surmise proved correct. For a time it was a game of hide-and-go-seek to trace the runaway. The stolid Indians looked on at the fruitless search through the camp. They kept a secret well. Finally, the truant was discovered and given the alternative of going back to her husband or to jail. She said she preferred to go to jail. But when she saw that the policeman meant business she changed her mind and decided to return to her husband. It was then too late for the return trip to Kyuquot so the company stopped halfway at Magkeet. The camp was soon quiet, the members in bed.

Tired, Father Lemmens rolled himself in his blanket and was soon asleep on the ground—Indian camps have no flooring, but his rest was cut short by a bedlam of noise. He looked up. The camp, men, women and children was alive with excitement—evidently a "good time" of jollification according to savage ideas was afoot. All were in festive regalia, in grotesque and hideous makeup. The men wore devilish-looking masks; feathers, red and black paint and rabbit tails were much in evidence.

The lurid light from the campfires playing on the weird figures and the singing and dancing to the accompaniment of sticks beating on flat pieces of wood made the scene terrorizing. Worse was to come. Father Lemmens suddenly wide-awake to the awful proceedings and to his danger, took in the situation. It was the dance season of the winter solstice, a time of festivities mixed with orgies which often lasted till March, but it was

also a time of truce during which any violation of the peace incurred punishment.

And here was the mildest of missionaries an unwilling spectator and perhaps a victim to the mad deviltry of savages. For a time he remained perfectly still. After a while there was a lull in the terrible din. Then, four naked Indians were brought to the center of the camp. Oh, horrors! The right arm of each was seized, a long knife was thrust through the fleshy part, so that it protruded on the opposite side of the arm. Next, two Indians to a man fastened ropes to either ends of the knife, and by these, dragged the victims three times around the camp-fire. After this torture the unfortunates were released.

At this juncture in the awful proceedings, Father Lemmens' attention was turned to his interpreter, the policeman, who was holding a parley with the leading Indians. The priest was too recent an arrival on the coast to understand what was being said. When the homeward trip was resumed next day, he asked the policeman why the four men had been punished.

"Because they disturbed the peace by quarreling," answered the wily traitor. He did not add that he had also accused the priest of bringing trouble among the people, by forcing the runaway woman back to Kyuquot, and had suggested that therefore he should suffer the same penalty as the other disturbers of the peace.

"Why did they not do it?" asked unperturbed Father Lemmens when later he was told of the event.

"At first they were for doing it," his informer answered, "but someone in the council of the Indians argued, 'If we do that to a white man, the Big Chief in Victoria (the Governor) will send a gunboat to shoot us.'"

The policeman, the missionary's bodyguard, as it were, he whose duty it was to protect life, had put the missionary up for torture! But Father Lemmens was spared to be consecrated Bishop of Victoria in 1888 and to erect the fine brick cathedral that still stands a monument to his zeal and labor, at the corner of View and Blanshard Streets.

The day of the formal opening of this cathedral beheld





ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, VICTORIA, B. C.

Erected by Bishop Lemmens who died in Guatemala, a martyr to his zeal in defraying the cost of its erection



one of the greatest Catholic demonstrations ever seen in Victoria. In the hall which had for some time been used as a cathedral, Masses were said from six to nine o'clock on the last morning and then the solemn adieu was taken of the old building, with all its sacred associations. The final act in the affecting leave-taking was the removal by the Bishop of the Blessed Sacrament, the clergy singing the *Pange Lingua*. At the door of the new cathedral the band from H.M. Warship *Warspite*, replaced the chant with the jubilant strains of the march, "Silver Trumpets."

What passed in the soul of the Prelate as he walked up the aisle of the beautiful edifice, adoringly, majestically carrying the Lord of Hosts into His own new Temple, angels alone can reveal.

It was in the effort to cancel the debt on this cathedral that Bishop Lemmens succumbed to a fever attack while working among the Indians in Central America and died a martyr to his apostolic zeal.

Bishop Lemmens was ever known as "a profound theologian and a splendid scholar. He was also an excellent speaker, every sermon of his being a complete treatise, from which nothing could be taken and to which nothing could be added without destroying the subject." During the vacancy of the See which followed Bishop Brondel's appointment to Montana in 1884, the then Father Lemmens was chosen as delegate of the Vancouver Island Diocese to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore.

---

## CHAPTER XX

---

### HONOR MISSIONARY ROLL (THE 60'S)

**I**N ORDER of time, Father Peter Rondeault heads the Honor Missionary Roll of Vancouver Island, since he came to Victoria in 1858. He persevered with the Cowichan Indians, with very little return on their part, from that time until his death in 1900. Father Rondeault had been ordained to the priesthood in 1857 and was on the teaching staff of the College at Terrebonne, Province of Quebec, when Bishop Demers came there with his appeal for missionaries. The young professor gave an enthusiastic response. On arriving in his new field on Vancouver Island, he was, at his own urgent request, detailed to the charge of the murderous Cowichans. He set out from Victoria with a sack of flour, a gun and his breviary. Thus freighted he tramped twelve miles to Saanich. There he got a canoe and paddled twenty-five miles to his Indian flock in the woodland mountains. The Cowichans were a tribe, four thousand strong, valiant in savagery and set in grossest superstition. The priest who cast in his lot with them was the gentlest, the kindest and most peaceful in the Catholic priesthood.

On his arrival at the tribal village he was hospitably received by an Indian who boasted alike of his friendship with the priest and of the fifteen murders he had committed before he had reached his thirtieth year. The ragged skin coat, fringed with long locks of human hair, which he wore, showed that his boastings were founded on truth. We may suppose that good-hearted Father Rondeault "had a nut to crack" in such a specimen.

But the erstwhile murderer became a Christian and volunteered his labor towards the erection of the old stone church which still stands on Comeakin Hill, overlooking Cowichan



Bay on the east shore of Vancouver Island. This historic building, long since deserted, was known as the "Butter Church," because Father Rondeault, from necessity a farmer, paid the builders with the proceeds from the butter he sold.

The church was opened in November, 1870, and for ten years continued to serve the Indians. Its location was found not central enough, so a new church was built at the crossing of the roads nearer what is now Duncan. Everything that could be removed from the old stone church was incorporated into the latter. Nothing but the solid stone walls remained, and there they are to this day. But, what extravagant stories they have inspired: You see these tales in print—in magazines, in dailies—one tells of a suicide committed within the consecrated walls, another of a murder. You state the truth but that is passed over; the imaginary tales of tourists or of superficial writers hold their own.

Father Rondeault was beloved of God and of man, of savage, and, like St. Francis of Assisi, of beast. His extraordinary gift of Wisdom, of which he seemed totally unaware, and his charming hospitality drew clerical visitors from eastern Canada, as well as his Vancouver Island confrères, to his "open-house" in Cowichan—a half day trip from Victoria on a bi-weekly steamer—as to a refreshing place of pilgrimage. To them all the missionary's humble abode was an inviting home where guests could relax pleasantly under the benignant smile and quiet humor of their host, Father Rondeault.

The year 1883 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Father Rondeault's entrance into the country. Not to let the occasion pass unnoticed, the missionary's friends, the Honorable W. Smythe, then Premier, and many gentlemen prominent in the public eye, with several of Father Rondeault's brethren in the priesthood, went to Cowichan to unite with the settlers in a fitting celebration of the revered priest's Silver Jubilee. To commemorate an event so thoroughly enjoyed by all, irrespective of creed, it was resolved to inaugurate a pioneer society to meet on each recurrence of this anniversary.

The holiest men oftentimes feel their hands empty of good

works when the end comes. When the kind old priest came to St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria to await the final summons, he could not conceal his anxiety over the poor account he had to give his Judge. The Sister in attendance once said, "You, Father, an old missionary, afraid to die?"

"Ah, Sister, death is an expiation, and as a priest I will have to give an account of all the absolutions I have given."

Was it leniency towards his penitents that troubled him, he who, setting himself aside as Judge, would not "quench the smoking flax"?

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, champion missionaries of Canada, had come to Oregon as early as 1847. On coming to his See in Vancouver Island, Bishop Demers had repeatedly asked for their co-operation in the work of evangelization there. It was only in 1858 that an increase in the number of their available priests made it possible for them to comply with the Bishop's request. Among the first were Reverend L. J. D'Herbomez, Vicar of the Oblate Missions on the Pacific, Fathers Ricard, Chirouse, Pandosy, the Sub-Deacon Brother Blanchet and the lay-Brother Janin.

The new missionaries set themselves to their apostolate, as is their way, with the holy daring that does not flinch before privation, sufferings nor obstacles. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate were located by the Bishop on the beautiful Esquimalt Harbor, where some of the Fathers attended to the spiritual needs of the sailors. Others went forth from that mission center to christianize the natives on other parts of the Island. Father Chirouse was particularly successful in his work with the Indians. Father Morice tells us that "He induced over two thousand Indians to renounce gambling, conjuring and murdering." As a mark of their sincerity "they loaded his canoe with the paraphernalia of the Medicine Man, as well as with knives, gambling dice and other accessories to sin."

The immediate spiritual needs of the Island having been thus provided for, other Oblates were dispersed for duty on the mainland of British Columbia. Father Pandosy laid a solid



MOST REVEREND LOUIS J. D'HERBOMEZ, O.M.I.

First Vicar-Apostolic of the Mainland  
of British Columbia

Consecrated by Most Reverend F. N. Blanchet, assisted  
by Most Reverend Modeste Demers, in St. Andrew's  
Cathedral, Victoria, B. C., October 9, 1864





foundation in the Okanagan Lake district. Father Ricard was stationed at Fort Hope on the Fraser. Father Leon Fouquet who came to the west in 1859 established the church in New Westminster, then the capital of a colony distinct from Vancouver Island.

They were incomparable missionaries, those Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Besides those already named, Fathers Durieu, Grandidier, Joyol, Le Jacq, Gendre, Baudre, and McGuckin were always in the thickest of the fray against the heathen strongholds. No less valiant may we consider their armor-bearers, the lay Brothers, Janin, Sorel, Vernet, Allen and McStay.

From one place only did these Soldiers of Christ have to withdraw hopelessly, this was Fort Rupert, a small island near the north-west coast of Vancouver Island, in 1863. The Indians there, with too few exceptions, remained callous to divine teaching.

In 1864, the increasing population of British Columbia called for the creation of a new diocese. Father L. J. D'Herbomez was elected Bishop of the vicariate-apostolic of British Columbia, which was then a separate colony from Vancouver Island. He and his two successors, Bishop Durieu and Bishop Dontenwill, both Oblates, resided in New Westminster.

Slowly the Oblates on Vancouver Island were recalled to the mainland to fill the pressing needs of the new diocese which, as long as it was to be in the pioneer stage, was entrusted to the missionary Oblates. By 1866 their work in Victoria closed. Well have they deserved of the people on Vancouver Island and on the mainland; they may possibly be equalled in both divisions of the province, but never surpassed. Their names are in lasting remembrance.

Father Joseph Mandart—Victoria, 1862-1893, was a simple Breton who, under a plain exterior, hid a store of Parisian learning. The contrast was not lost on that prowling purloiner of souls who seeks to know everything about everybody, and to fool everyone in the nicest way. In his incorrigible pride,

and despite repeated failures, Satan may have thought how easy it would be to lure to vainglory a learned levite who had no worldly prestige. He had dared a like snare to the Son of God. He had taken Him to a high mountain from which all the kingdoms of the world could be seen. Liar that he is, he had said with bravado, "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."

He approached Joseph Mandart, the young ecclesiastic, as he was trudging along the dusty road of his home, Brittany. Satan went straight to the point. That had been his method with Our Lord. In his bland way he said, "If you will write a Life of Christ as I dictate it to you, I will make you famous."

The answer came like a shot. "Va t'en, grapin. Begone, you fiend, I will have nothing to do with you."

A few years afterwards, the good priest was in his out-of-the-world Saanich mission, when he heard of Renan's "Life of Christ," and the pinnacle of fame to which the author was raised in the world of letters. The humble missionary remarked, "Perhaps, the devil went to him with the offer he made to me."

Renan's "Life of Christ" aims at disproving, in classical French, the divinity of our Holy Redeemer. Readers may classify this incident with the "Believe It or Not" series. We who knew Father Mandart as an unpretentious, humble missionary *do* believe it.

Like all missionaries Father Mandart was not often found at his home, which was supposed to be in Saanich. Was it because he was eccentric, or mortified, better say he was both, that he took up his first lodging in this poor mission in the upturned, widespread roots of a fallen tree. He placed stakes around the enclosure for walls. Here he lived for a year and said daily Mass; on Sunday he celebrated Mass in an Indian camp. Above all Father Mandart lived with the Indians but he built a church on San Juan Island, and often went there to visit the few French residents.

In time he built and furnished a house for himself at Saanich, but he never used a bed. He slept on the floor. Once

a year he wore stockings, and this was on Good Friday when he participated in the solemn services in the Cathedral. Going stockingless was a penance he gave to his priest penitents, as was one day discovered by accident, to the great confusion of one of them. For years he always took the part of Christ in the singing of the Passion. No one since has sung the sublime ritual more feelingly. It stands to reason that a priest who was so penitential, earnest, zealous and exact in the ministry stood high in the esteem of all and was beloved by his congregation.

The division of Vancouver Island diocese and the subsequent withdrawal of the Oblates from Victoria to concentrate their energies on the vast portion of the mainland allotted to them, again left Bishop Demers in sore need of priests. This want led to a new era which opened in 1863 and continued twenty-five or thirty years.

The new era which was to give the diocese such solidarity came through the arrival of missionaries trained in the American College of Louvain. This admirable college, founded in 1857 by two American bishops aided by the Belgian hierarchy, filled a great need during the time that North America could not supply its own clergy. Its purpose was to enable American born ecclesiastics to follow thorough courses in theology in Europe, and to afford those of European nationality an easy means of preparing for the work of ministry in America.

Naturally, Bishop Demers had been one of the first to endorse a foundation so favorable to the cause of the church in America.

His co-operation was rewarded a hundredfold for the Louvain College gave the Victoria diocese the Most Reverend Charles John Seghers and the Most Reverend B. Orth, two archbishops; Most Reverend J. B. Brondel and Most Reverend J. N. Lemmons, two bishops; besides sixteen priests. After their years of training in this school of strict Christian discipline, they came across sea and continent, with Spartan spirit, to give and not to take; to spend and to be spent in the cause of Christ.

The first to come from that college was Father Charles

John Seghers. He was twenty-four years old and had just been ordained to Holy Orders. We have seen how thoroughly he had been schooled in the virtues which eventually crowned him with martyrdom.

Bishop Brondel was also an alumnus of the Louvain College. He sailed for America in 1863, while the sacred oils of ordination were fresh upon him. He belonged to the archdiocese of Oregon until 1880, when he became Bishop of Victoria.

Father Jonckau, 1867-1888, was a Belgian, born in Jupille. He had received a business training and was on a mercantile voyage to Java when, as he said, he received the call to the Vancouver Island Missions, walking up and down the steamer's deck. He trained at Louvain, and then threw his sterling qualities and his business acumen into the cause and interest of the Church on Vancouver Island. During his apostolate he was mostly connected with the Cathedral at Victoria, but he substituted on the missions far and near, even in Alaska, with zeal and humility. When the See of Vancouver Island became vacant in 1884, by the appointment of Bishop Brondel to the new formed diocese of Montana, it was a foregone conclusion, soon confirmed by Rome, that Father Jonckau would be the Bishop. He had always protested against such a possibility, now he protested against the Bulls. With more emphasis than ceremony he wrote to the papal authority: "I am sickly as the enclosed doctor's certificate testifies; I am very small and insignificant of stature; and if you will not believe it, I will come to Rome to show myself."

If Archbishop Seghers had not been in Rome to bear out these statements, the outspoken Father Jonckau would have been carried there for the record of his merits was there ahead of him. But he was not made Bishop.

In his career as a Victoria missionary there was nothing to distinguish Father Jonckau from co-workers in the ministry. Except for volunteering to be quarantined with the Indians in an outbreak of smallpox, during which, as he said with



dry humor, "I sent the Indians to heaven that time thick as flies," he was like the rest, self-forgetful, humble, zealous, a model in the priesthood. The morning of his sudden death his Following of Christ was found open on his table at Chapter 23, Book one, "On the thought of Death."

Father Jonckau did not experience the terrors of a constant fear of death at the hands of savages, nor had he to bear the isolation and hardships that were the common lot, and yet fifty years after his burial, when his remains were disinterred from beneath the altar at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria, to be placed in a crypt, they were found in a perfect state of preservation. He had been buried in a damp place, for such Victoria soil is, and his body was not petrified. How account for the preservation?

Is it a divine favor granted to a Saint?

Father August Brabant, 1869-1912, Courtray, West Flanders, was a type of splendid manhood and priesthood. On arriving in Victoria he taught at the boys' school, St. Louis College. In 1874, Bishop Seghers took Father Brabant to Barclay Sound, one hundred fifty miles up the west coast of Vancouver Island, and installed him with the fierce Hesquiats to do the best he could with them. This best was for some years to bear with the ridicule and contempt of inveterate savages.

The isolated Hesquiats had not been in contact with the French Canadians of the Hudson's Bay fur trade. Therefore, unlike the Indians on the east side of the Island, and throughout British Columbia, they had not been prepared for the coming of the Black gown. Instead of receiving him with the Sign of the Cross and the singing of hymns as the others had done, they pointed the finger of scorn at him when he passed by. The chief took the initiative, "Look at that white man," he would say. "He must have done something very bad, or be a fool to stay here by himself; he is not earning money, and we do not want him." Unmoved, unshaken, the staunch missionary stood this irony. He, the nobleman who, among cultured

people, was the center of cordiality, humor and entertaining conversation.

Speaking of the people with whom he lived, he was wont to say, "There are only two whites, myself and my dog." The dog was a fine, white St. Bernard animal. In time the Indian potentate who had swayed tribal opinion unfavorably, began to see the priest in a new light. He spoke out his altered mind: "This white man is all right. He has helped us all the time. All he wants is to make us good." In time, the whole Hesquiat tribe became edifying Christians.

Father Brabant had been with the Indians eighteen months, when smallpox, brought in by a member of a neighboring tribe, broke out. Frenzy rose to its highest pitch for the Indians knew well the fatal consequences of the visitation. As a sort of incantation against the scourge, the men went madly about the woods firing their muskets, the women howled and the younger people ran this way and that, shouting out their lungs.

Things were at this stage when Father Brabant, who had been absent in Victoria, returned. He set to work to do what he could for the poor people. He vaccinated the tribe, visited the sick, insisted on precautionary measures. He buried the ghastly corpses, not in coffins, nor rough boxes, but in a canoe, covered with planks. The canoe was drawn quite a distance into the bush, and left there with its dead contents.

Thanks to the devotedness of the priest, the epidemic was checked but it had claimed seven victims. Among these were the wife and the sister of the chief, Matlahaw. The tribe that had spread the plague, and had been left to its primitive resources to treat with the disease, registered forty deaths.

The Hesquiat chief did not behave, in his grief, with the courage attributed to chiefs; in fact, he seemed scarcely to be alive. The solicitous missionary offered him and his aged father and two relatives night hospitality. The Indians were up before daybreak every morning. Matlahaw continued morose and avoided company, spending much of his time in a shanty built of a few planks, which the priest had given him permission to put up on his premises.

On October 28th, soon after Holy Mass, an excited messenger came to tell the priest that Matlahaw was sick. When, like the good Samaritan that he was, the priest entered the shanty, he found the would-be sick man squatting by the fire. He pulled at the skin of his leg and moaned small-pox.

"I will doctor you," assured the priest, "and you will be better tonight." As he was leaving the shanty, Father Brabant asked Matlahaw to return the double barrelled gun which he had borrowed that morning. Matlahaw reached out for it where it stood against the wall, muttering as he did so that one of the barrels was not loaded. Then, smiling, he took the gun and pointed it at the priest. Instinctively, but still not suspecting evil intent, Father Brabant quickly turned aside his head. There was a sharp report; a sudden pain, and blood spurting from a wounded hand—from the anointed hand of a priest.

Still unsuspecting of malice—the good are so slow, almost dense at believing wrong of others—the missionary hurried to a nearby stream to bathe his bleeding hand. He was in a stooped position bending down to the water when a charge of shot hit him in the back and right shoulder—twenty-six shot as was afterwards discovered. Now he understood. The chief had meant to kill him. Later on, he thought about the circumstances that, no doubt, occasioned the foul deed. First, there was jealousy; the chief thought the priest had supplanted him and that he was, therefore, no longer the head of the tribe. Second, his superstitious nature led him to believe that the priest was the evil spirit that had brought on the recent epidemic and caused the deaths of his wife and sister.

At the moment, however, Father Brabant's greatest concern was self-preservation. He went to his house, but finding no one there, he hurried as well as he could to the camp. There he told the men what had happened. In his "Reminiscences, Vancouver Island and its Missions," we read the sequel. The telling dims our eyes.

"After a few moments a film came over my eyes. Thinking I would not survive, I knelt down and said my acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition. Then I got up, went to my house,

and wrote on a piece of paper the name of the man who had shot me, so that no innocent man would be accused. I put the paper in my desk, locked it and put the key into my pocket."

All this clear thinking, this calm spiritual and corporal action with twenty-six shot in his back, and his right hand almost shattered! In the days that followed the Indians waited upon their patient as well as they knew how. They were full of concern. Some of the men went out with guns and axes in search of the murderer. They failed to trace him then, but nine months later a corpse was found ten miles from camp. A gun lay beside it. It was the gun Matlahaw had borrowed from the priest. Had death by cold, starvation and remorse spared the chief a more cruel fate?

Father Brabant survived, thanks to his wonderful physique and to the surgical skill of the doctors in Victoria, where he was transferred on the government schooner *Rocket*. The doctors, at first, thought that Father Brabant's whole hand would have to be amputated or at least two of his fingers. At this announcement the priest took a stand worthy of his calling, "If I cannot say Mass let me die, for a priest who cannot offer the Holy Sacrifice is a useless man in the world."

His hand was saved and the noble priest continued to offer the Holy Sacrifice for thirty-seven years, till the end came, quietly, peacefully at St. Joseph's Hospital, Victoria, July 4, 1912.



---

## CHAPTER XXI

---

### HONOR MISSIONARY ROLL (THE 70'S)

Father Joseph Hubert Leroy—Belgian—1874, 1882

THE priests who came to Vancouver Island from the Old Country aspired to missionary ministry among the Indians. Great was the disappointment of Father Leroy on arriving on these shores, to be retained at cathedral duties in Victoria, incidental to which was the teaching of the boys at St. Louis College. During the eight years of his life in Victoria he was seldom, if ever, engaged with natives. In compensation, he asked on his deathbed, what he had often expressed in health, that since he had not had the privilege of laboring with the Indians, he might, at least, be buried with them. He lies in the native cemetery on the Saanich Reserve.

In April, 1863, Father Leroy received the sacred unction which made him a priest. At first he was a professor in his native diocese; after that he was vice president of the American College at Louvain till he left for Victoria in 1874. During the last two years of his life he bore with remarkable fortitude the sufferings caused by cancer of the stomach. With his death the poor, the sick and the unfortunate lost a loving, self-forgetting friend and father.

Father Joseph Nicolaye, Hollander, 1876-1919, came to Victoria with Father M. N. Lemmens, later Bishop of Vancouver Island. In Father Nicolaye the beauty of priestly charity went with the beauty and charm of person. Pleasing, affable, abounding with the joy of the Holy Ghost, he went about doing good. The Indians knew his goodness, so did the widow, the orphan and even the rogue.

One afternoon a man of the "hard-up" class accosted the "open-handed priest" on the street. "Father, I can't get work here, but I have the prospect of a job in Seattle. I'm broke. If you could lend me eight dollars for my fare, and a few days' board to tide me over till I get work, I will return it with my first pay."

Without ado, Father Nicolaye took out his check book and filled out a blank for eight dollars.

"Thanks, Father, I can leave tonight," answered the stranger. In due time Father Nicolaye got his monthly statement from the bank. He looked at it twice. Could it be possible *eighty* dollars had been drawn! The return check was there to prove it. "Charity thinketh no evil" but it may allow one to think how little it takes to make "eight, eighty" and \$8.00, \$80.00.

Only five days after landing from the long trip from Europe through the central United States, Father Nicolaye left for the west coast missions, as has been mentioned before, while his traveling companion, Father Lemmens, went to Nanaimo.

Father Nicolaye's fine appearance was made most remarkable by the contrast between his youthful appearance and his snow-white hair. The fact is, his hair turned white in a single night, the result of fear when attacked by the Indians. It happened when he was on the west coast with the Numukamis, one of six tribes of Barclay Sound to whom he had been assigned some two and a half years before.

One night the missionary was aroused by the cry of infuriated Indians. He opened the upper part of his Dutch door to ascertain the trouble. The Indians let him know their grievance with rage in their voices, and clubs and axes ready for action. He had interfered with one of their ancestral superstitions which related to the birth of twins. The violation of such age-old laws brought famine to the tribe, so they believed. "Come out here," they shouted, "we shall have no fish and will die, and that because you white men do not care for the laws of our forefathers."

The missionary tried to reason with them but it was use-

less. Superstition born and bred in the bone of the Indian has everywhere been the missionary's greatest problem. How cope with generation upon generation of pagans whose religion has its root in superstition? Trained intelligence is lost on dulled mentality. The enraged Indians kept up their threats for hours, time is nothing to them. They interrupted every effort at explanation with taunts. They were bent on bloodshed.

When Father Nicolaye later related this dreadful experience he said, "It would have been easy to get me, for my only shield was the lower part of the door. It must have been magnified in their eyes, because they kept saying, 'Come out here,' when they could have thrown the half-door down with a push. But my hour had not come, so God did not permit the Indians to reach over for me across that simple barrier."

After several hours the Indians dispersed somewhat mollified by the priest's assurance that in a few days they would have the biggest shoal of fish ever known. Whether he was guided by natural signs, or by Providence in giving them this assurance, the promise was fulfilled. Herring came in such schools that they actually leaped upon the shore to the very doors of the camps. Superstition was weakened by this manifestation of Providence but it was not yet dead.

When Father Nicolaye looked in his mirror, the morning after the attack, he did not know himself. His coal-black hair had turned to shining white. Speaking about this awful night Father Nicolaye said, "Pride is very strong in us. It shows itself when and where least expected. While I was talking to that mob in their language, I made a slip of the tongue. The savages laughed uproariously, I felt the blood rush to my face. I had been much insulted, and had gone through much mental agony during those long hours when I faced death at the hands of savages, but, I admit, that slip of mine hurt more than all the rest. Such is pride."

The grievance against the missionary was occasioned by an act of humanity in which Father Nicolaye had violated a law based on superstition. Father Nicolaye's explanation of this law is given in the Historical Number of the *Orphans' Friend*,

1914. The birth of twins among the Indians was regarded as a calamity. The unfortunate parents were banished to an island, where a rude dwelling of cedar boards was quickly erected. To prevent escape their canoe was smashed to pieces. On this island they had to remain for three years, living on fish duly seasoned during twelve months. They had to pray to the moon that evil be averted from them and from their relatives. Moreover, the mother was not allowed to nurse the babies until the fourth day. The weaker was then squeezed to death and the stronger allowed to live. This heartlessness to twins is all the more strange when one knows that Indians indulge their children as much as do the fondest civilized women.

On this occasion Father Nicolaye had been absent from the mission for two weeks. On his return to Numukamis he was told of the woman who had given birth to twins. He learned that she was lying in the woods on a cedar mat with no other shelter than a few pine branches. It was February, cold and damp. One of the twins was already dead. The mother and the surviving baby would soon die if left in those killing conditions. Come what might, the missionary determined to remove the unfortunate woman from her doom. The husband, who had to share his wife's lot, was at first unwilling to break away from superstition. He feared also the anger of the tribe. After some persuasion on the part of the missionary, he consented to carry his wife and child to the house of his parents. Here they were by no means welcome. Here, too, the accursed young mother would have been left to her own fate had it not been for the care given her by the man of God. Had the woman died he would have been blamed. But she lived and he was blamed almost "unto death" as we have just seen.

Father Gustave Donckele, Belgian, 1877-1907. Father Donckele was a man after God's own heart. When he arrived in the diocese his health was so poor that Father Jonckau remarked, "Well, what an acquisition! How soon shall we have to get a coffin for him?" Thank God, for the welfare of souls in Cowichan, the Gulf Islands and the Residential Indian



School on Kuper Island, the coffin was not needed for many years.

Father Donckele was just about idolized by his own flock and highly esteemed by all who knew him. In 1878, he went to Cowichan as assistant to genial Father Rondeault. He lived most of the time in his canoe going from one island to another with the glad tidings of salvation. In 1890, he had to exchange his ideal missionary program of meditative paddling in and out of weirdly silent islands, following his native sons and exhorting them to religion, to be confined at duty's call within the limits of an Indian school.

This brings us to the opening of Industrial Schools for Indians in British Columbia. The development of the Province through the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway decided the Legislative Assembly to use its Indian Trust Funds on developing the best means to place the natives in touch with civilization. This they did through offering native children residence in boarding schools where they were to be provided for and taught the ways of civilization, absolutely free of cost. They were to be the wards of the Government. Fairly and benevolently has the Government acquitted itself of the responsibility.

In 1889, two such schools were opened in British Columbia; one at Kootenay, under Catholic management, the other at Metlakahtla, on the northwest coast, by sectarians. Those of Kamloops and of Kuper Island, proposed at the same time, were delayed on account of the difficulty of choosing sites.

One spring day, 1890, Father Donckele was on his missionary rounds when he unexpectedly came upon the recently erected buildings of the Kuper Island School. It was the first intimation he had of the project for such an establishment. His priestly heart took in the issue at once. The Indians of this district were Catholics, if anything. It was a question of souls that the school be established on Catholic lines.

Father Donckele immediately informed the Bishop about the matter. Bishop Lemmens was as surprised as Father Donckele had been, but with the promptness of a true general

of Christ he gave the missionary instructions to call upon Mr. Gordon, the Member of Parliament for the electorate concerned. A better friend to the Catholic cause than Mr. Gordon could not be found. In fact, he owed his life to good Father Rondeault, who had appeared on the scene when the honorable gentleman was about to suffer death at the hands of a murderous Indian.

In the interview with Father Donckele, Mr. Gordon said, "How sorry I am that you did not come yesterday. I have just signed Mr. X's application; but it is not too late. I will wire Ottawa to revoke the application. Of course you must have the school. Roman Catholic priests are the only ministers who accomplish any good with the Indians."

In this providential way the Kuper Island School came under the control of a Catholic principal and teachers. When all was ready for occupancy, a Catholic layman was put in charge, but he and others who followed him did not succeed. The Indian boys would not let themselves be ruled. Though the teachers were excellent men they were not able to cope with these semi-savage youths. In this dilemma, Bishop Lemmens had to sacrifice one of his missionary priests.

Father Donckele accepted the charge. His calm, firm, kindly management made the school a model which directors of other institutions of the kind came to study. Far from blaming his predecessors for their want of success, he said that if he had not had experience of Indian character, he too would have failed. The school, primarily opened for boys only, soon admitted girls as well and three Sisters of St. Ann were added to the staff to care for them.

In a short time the boys were working quietly in the fields, in the shoeshop and at carpentry, and they were taught the three "R's." Not only this but a band was formed, the Government, of course, supplying all the instruments. Under the instructions of the very musical Mr. Gallant, the house carpenter, the Kuper Island School became the great attraction at the Queen's Birthday celebrations annually held in Victoria. The

boys in their uniforms and with their gentlemanly behavior were a fine set to look at.

The girls were taught domestic work. Under the instruction of the Sisters they cooked, washed, ironed and sewed—nor is the inevitable mending to be overlooked. Think of the socks and the stockings alone that had to be darned! After a few short years samples of their needlework were sent to the Fairs and carried off prizes by the dozen.

Father Donckele was the right man for the place, but what a humdrum life for the self-sacrificing missionary!

In the spring of 1902 there was a happy clerical gathering at the prosperous school to celebrate the Reverend Principal's twenty-fifth sacerdotal anniversary. The school gave a complimentary program. The perfection of this program, especially the English enunciation, was an agreeable surprise to the guests.

Among the gifts presented to the Jubilarian, who was that day proclaimed Dean, was a heavy silver headed cane and a silver pipe case. On each was engraved the inscription "To Reverend G. Donckele by Rt. Rev. G. Orth 1902."

In connection with this subject of Residential Indian Schools it is interesting to go back to 1807 and hear what the noble philanthropist, Lord Selkirk, said on the subject. In his book "On the Civilization of the Indians in British Columbia," he advocated the "establishment of schools in which young Indians may be instructed, not only in ordinary branches, but also in industrial pursuits." He would have certain portions of the country set apart for the Indians alone, and the Legislature applied to for an Act to authorize the Governor of Canada to fix, by proclamation, the limits of the country reserves for the use of the Indians and the suppression of the liquor traffic.

All these details have since been embodied in the Reserve System in the Industrial Schools, and in the law making it illegal to give or to sell strong drink to Indians.

Father John Althoff, Hollander, 1878-1926. The Church requires that candidates for the altar be without deformity, and be at least of medium height. There is, however, a wave of exultation among the faithful when the finest in manhood, in physique and in attainments dedicates his possibilities to the service of the Church. Such was Father Althoff in his six foot two of manifold qualifications, all devoted to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. In his case God put will and deed together. The day after his arrival in Victoria, Bishop Seghers called him into his office. "Father, I have been looking forward to your coming. I have your work mapped out for you in Wrangell, Alaska. Visit the Indian missions around here, and be ready to leave for the north, with me, at the end of the month."

Poor young priest, it was an historical honor conferred on his twenty-four years, but he viewed it in its overwhelming responsibility. He was too stunned to say anything. He tells us that he shook from head to foot. Alaska! that far, far country nearly a thousand miles away! Alaska, where there was no priest in the whole extent of the territory! He, a raw recruit just out of the seminary, to go there and be the first resident priest, among Indians, miners and unfriendly sects!

While crossing the ocean to America he and his traveling companion, Father Eussen, had discussed that mysterious, little known country. Bishop Seghers' long Alaskan tour was the talk in the newspapers of Europe and America. "Of course," the young priests said, "Bishop Seghers would never think of sending inexperienced priests to lay the foundation of the Church so far away, and in so large a territory."

And yet, he was doing it. The fact is, the Bishop had been told of Father Althoff's fitness for the tremendous work. Life in Wrangell was rough in the extreme, the weather was inclement, shacks to lodge in, rubber boots, rubber coats, rubber hats to go about in; rough men, who put on good manners only when they met him—well, all that could pass if these men would only come to church. The Indians attended the Presbyterian Church, or stayed away from church altogether.



The only real work the zealous missionary did while at Wrangell, besides praying, was going on an annual visit to the Cassiar Mines. Perhaps the most striking feature in missionary experience is that, setting out full of vivacity, of energetic action, to be up and doing, to convert souls, the missionary finds his activities soon confined in a nutshell. Souls will not respond. He who comes to save souls is left alone in the quietude of prayer, before the Tabernacle.

Father Althoff prayed. Piety was his most striking characteristic. As iron seeks the magnet so did he the Tabernacle; there, he would be seen, kneeling in rapt adoration, sometimes for hours. An onlooker could not but feel that it was the outpouring of his burning love of God. He could go to confession but once a year. Priests have to do that, too, you know. When he wanted to go—the holiest even feel the need—he opened the Tabernacle door and confessed to its divine Prisoner.

The mission in Wrangell, after a three years' trial, proving absolutely fruitless, Father Althoff was called to Victoria. But his true field was Alaska, so in 1885 when there was a rush to the new-found Juneau gold fields, Father Althoff was on his way back to the North.

The story of his popularity among the Wrangell miners had gone before him. But this was unnecessary. His personality, his friendliness, his financeering ability that showed itself in so many ways, soon made him the great man in the community. By nature he was a keen observer, a good listener and an absorbing entertainer. By grace, charity directed him to the most miserable, physically and spiritually—the sick poor, the poverty-stricken and the dying. He was a father to poor children. He might be seen going happily to a store with a crowd of them—a crowd was easily gathered around such a priest—and, arriving at the counter, say to the clerk, "Dress these children." He also delighted in giving them picnics, all at his own expense. It may be mentioned that he had his personal income from his far-away home in Holland and so could indulge his love of giving.

While Juneau progressed, and the quartz mines in Douglas developed and produced great returns, the Klondike came into being. The adventurers all had to pass by Juneau on their way to the Yukon. Father Althoff helped many of them materially and all of them spiritually, but at the same time he thought of the spiritual concerns of the territory at large. In his mind a religious order was necessary to fill the growing needs of missionary work in Alaska. He went to Baltimore and laid the case before Cardinal Gibbons.

His Eminence, while taking note of the situation, studied its representative—his experience, his zeal, his capacity for organization—and then—he gave Father Althoff the second shock of his life. He offered him the Bishopric of Alaska. This Father Althoff would not accept. The matter ended there and then. When the Jesuits accepted the field, Father Althoff retired. He had given seventeen years of true stewardship to God and to the public. To this day he is remembered as the first resident priest in Alaska. In Victoria nine years and in Nelson until his death in 1926, the blessings of Father Althoff's energetic, tactful zeal rebounded on the congregation and the citizens, and was evident in the delight he took in beautifying God's sanctuary.

Father Louis Eussen, Hollander, 1878-1884. This frail young priest had the sterling qualities common to the missionaries from Louvain—humility, zeal and endurance even unto death. His companions in Louvain said he was a student never guilty of violation of rule, "not even of smoking surreptitiously," which was their confession that they sometimes were. On Vancouver Island his name is reverently remembered for his Eucharistic tramp from Alberni to Nanaimo, a distance of fifty-five miles.

Father Eussen was the first priest stationed at Alberni. From there he attended to the few settlers of the district and instructed the neighboring Indians. In his rounds he was often obliged to sleep in the woods rolled up in his blanket. He caught cold on the damp ground, and the cold developed into lung trouble with hemorrhages. At this crisis there was only one

thing to do, reach civilization without delay. The Blessed Sacrament was in the church. He could not leave it there indefinitely. His repeated hemorrhages made it imprudent for him to consume the Sacred Species. He was the guardian of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; he might drop on the long, lone trail; but he would carry Him with him. Surely, the Angels of the Presence kept watch over the priest of God as weak, panting and with aching chest he trudged along the rough road.

In the following letter addressed to his father, brother and sister, February 22, 1884, he describes the trip without, however, giving the reason for undertaking it at that inclement season. It says, "In this letter you will have a description of my trip from Alberni to Nanaimo, a trip which covered sixty-three miles in three days; this means twenty-one hours of walking each day through the woods. I left Alberni February 12th, a very cold day. I took up my knapsack, weighing thirty pounds, and hired an Indian as my guide, who carried my blankets and gun. I started for Qualicum where there was a big Indian reserve, forsaken at this time of year.

"The trail was covered with snow which made hard walking, but all we had to do was to follow the tracks of wolves and panthers. It was easier for me to follow their path than that of the Indian guide. After a two hours' walk we had to climb View Mountain 1,600 feet. Our breathing was much too precious to speak much during the steep ascent. I asked the guide if we were on the top. He said, 'Oh, no, this mountain has a brother which is much higher.' You can imagine that I wished Mount View was an only son. There was three feet of snow on the top of the 'brother mountain' but the wild beasts had made a track so we did not often sink in the snow. The Indian remarked that there must be a whole town of panthers nearby.

"Before going down we had something to eat, but I was shivering all over. I had many a fall, and the wonder is that my walking stick, which I am sending you, was not broken. After walking from eight o'clock in the morning till two in the afternoon, we reached Horne Lake and in two more hours'

walk on the beach we crossed Qualicum River. My long Span-beeksche boots served me well at this juncture. My guide was so tired and exhausted that he left a deer, which was only a few steps from us, in peace.

"When it commenced to get dark we chose a sleeping place under a tree. We made a good fire. The Indian slept while I kept watch, gun in hand. I spent the night reading my breviary, smoking and listening to the rustling of leaves. The clear moonlight broke in the darkness. The Indian preferred sleep to his share of the night watch, so I remained awake all night. When we had continued the forenoon journey two hours, we came to the mouth of the Qualicum River, where we found an old canoe. We made oars of an old board, and along the bank we pushed it ahead. At dusk I perceived a light some way down the woods and soon I heard the barking of dogs. We tied the canoe; ten minutes' walk brought us to a house enclosed with a fence. The occupants came out with lanterns and guns thinking the panthers were prowling about. I whistled, and asked if they would give us a night's lodging. They did so most hospitably. When I might have slept, a very impolite dog that kept barking all night prevented me from doing so.

"Next morning we said good-by to our host and resumed our march of twenty-two miles through the woods. My shoulders were very sore from the knapsack, and my feet from the big boots. You may imagine how happy I was when I reached Nanaimo at six o'clock that evening. The next day I left by steamer for Victoria."

When Father Eussen arrived at Nanaimo he learned that the priest was away on one of his missions, so he went to the convent. The Sister who opened the door to him recognized him as one dropped from the skies, as it were, and was about to exclaim her surprise at seeing him, when pointing to his breast Father Eussen whispered, "Blessed Sacrament." She led the way to the chapel where he deposited his precious Burden in the tabernacle.

Father Eussen's brother priests were amazed when they heard of how he had journeyed. They were able to judge of



the hardships encountered in all their bearings, so they considered it a missionary epic. Shortly after that, in the hope of recuperating, Father Eussen went to the home folks in Holland. After a year spent there he, deceived by appearances, was preparing to return to his beloved missionary career, when another hemorrhage set its seal on his desires in a better world. To show the stuff of which missionaries are made, we shall prolong this thrilling subject by quoting further from one of Father Eussen's letters to his dear ones.

This letter was dated, Numukamis, West Coast, Sept. 30, 1882: "Two weeks ago I left this place in a severe rainstorm for Dodger Cove. I rowed with all my might and strength against the storm for two hours. I even frightened a large sea-hound that was behind my boat, and looked at me about five minutes as if to say, 'Louis, you may well be afraid.'

"It was terrible weather, and darkness came on early. As it was out of the question for me to reach my house that night, I tied my boat in the woods, got some sticks to put up my tent, took up a board for my bed and in a few minutes, though I was on an American beach, I slept like an Arab in the desert—and, I dreamed. My dream was that Indians were after me, and hit me in the back with knives. At this, I awoke and found that I had fallen off my rest-board, and was lying on the stones. It was not a pleasant position.

"I smile sometimes when I think of the different kinds of cushions and bedding I have had in my few years' travel—my coat, my satchel, a sack of moss. Once I slept on the grass where there were some laths from the wreck of a boat. Next morning I had a few red marks on my face.

"I assure you that notwithstanding all this diversity I am very happy, and this kind of life is good for my health. I have not had one cold since I have been on this West Coast. I do not write you these things to elicit your sympathy, but only to show what missionary life is.

"This month the weather is beautiful, and my potatoes are fine—I am making pies. They would put your tarts to shame."

After twenty-six years, 1852-1878, the circuit of the Van-

couver Island diocese was dotted with twenty-four missions, ministered to by nine priests; to the south, Victoria, Esquimalt; to the east, Saanich, Cowichan, the Gulf Islands, Nanaimo; north, Alberni; west, Barclay Sound with its numerous tribes; and in southern Alaska, Wrangell, Juneau, Cassiar. All was now organized on a solid basis. Everything prepared to "proceed prosperously."

Each and every one of the missionaries who contributed to the foundation of the Church in the North-West Pacific was an inspiration to the other, but their grand model was the founder of the diocese, Bishop Modeste Demers, one of the greatest missionaries in North America.

*A lighted torch* enkindling brightest flame  
On those of others down the path of life,  
To gleam athwart the darkness and the gloom,  
And hearten many in the hours of strife.

*A steady footprint* for the pilgrim worn,  
Revealing safest road on time's bleak sand.  
Yea—*torch* and *guide* to all who followed on  
Was great Demers, first Bishop of our land!

S. M. M.—S. S. A.

How much more should we have in memory the heralds of the faith who have braved every peril and death itself, to spread the greatest of all boons—the Gospel of Christ—leaving footprints not only on the sands of time but of eternity.

---

## CHAPTER XXII

---

### AUXILIARIES

BISHOP DEMERS struggled against ill-health for many years, but, for all that, he did not lay aside his pastoral duties. He continued, too, giving missions to the Indians. In August, 1863, he went as far as Cariboo on a three months' tour of British Columbia. This journey recalled the scenes of his labors in those regions some twenty-one years back.

Well or not, early in 1864, he left for a second voyage to Europe for the purpose of obtaining priests and funds. He was as successful in both respects as he had been the first time. Moreover, this trip was made in much less time than that of 1847, owing to the greater convenience of travel by the trans-continental Southern Pacific Railway.

On his return to British Columbia he had to relax and go to San Francisco on a health sojourn. If there is efficacy in a name it should have been found in that of *Brother Jonathan*, the ship on which the Bishop sailed south December 12, 1864. The rest brought some relief.

In 1866, he again had to set aside his home occupations to attend the National Council of Bishops in Baltimore. Whether the call was from the States or from the Old Country, he, of all the bishops, had the farthest distance to travel. In October, 1869, he again crossed the continent and the ocean, this time to attend the Oecumenical Council of the Vatican. He was accompanied by Reverend Father Charles Seghers. The *Daily Colonist*, in notifying the public of their departure, says, "The flock of the Reverend Gentlemen, and their many friends in other denominations, all join in wishing them a pleasant journey and a safe return."

This kindly wish was only partially realized. The same organ informs its readers, February 15, 1870, that, "Everybody

will be sorry to learn that the excellent gentleman who presides over the missions in this colony, and who lately left to attend the Oecumenical Council, met with a serious accident while traveling through France. The Right Reverend Gentleman was traveling in a railway car when a collision took place. Several passengers were severely injured. The Bishop suffered a complete fracture of the left leg." Father Seghers had to continue on to Rome alone pending the Bishop's recovery. The good Bishop never fully recovered—in fact the accident was the beginning of the end—but, in the meantime, he was well enough to attend the Council sessions and to enjoy the privilege of receiving hospitality from the Pope, as did all the missionary bishops, during their stay in the Eternal City.

But the supreme happiness of his life, the memorable circumstances which compensated him a hundredfold for the sacrifices of his missionary existence, was the sublime moment when he voted, "Placet," "It pleases me," on the dogma declaring the infallibility of the Pope. When he took his leave of Pius IX, July 21, 1870, and asked for the blessing of His Holiness especially for a happy passage into eternity, the Holy Father said, "If you get to heaven first, reach me out a helping hand." One can understand the pain of this parting between the best of fathers and the most loving of sons.

And from now on, the prayer of Bishop Demers was that he might live to reach Victoria to die among his dear Indians. But he was threatened with a new danger. During the crossing on the Atlantic so violent a tempest raged that crew and passengers alike feared to be engulfed at any moment. In this imminent danger the passengers with one accord surrounded the Man of God, beseeching him to preserve them from the peril which faced them. The Bishop prayed long and calmly, then rising as one inspired he said, "Do not fear any more. I have made a vow to Good Saint Ann for the safety of those at sea. She has saved my life many times. Rest assured she will come to our help."

These words restored confidence. The tempest ceased, and the passengers, among whom were many Pontifical Zouaves,



showered their thanks on the Bishop. He, in his turn, hastened on landing to fulfil his vow.

In his farewell visit to his family parish, made as he passed through his native Quebec on the way back to Victoria, one of his relatives expressed the wish to see him come again. "Ah, if you knew how much I suffer," said the Bishop, who felt his health rapidly declining, "you would have no such vain hope."

This last leave-taking held something profoundly sad and sacred for all present. From the presbytery balcony the missionary Bishop addressed the crowd, bade them farewell and imparted his benediction. The people dispersed silently, tearfully bearing the precious memory of the holy Bishop's virtues. The priests from surrounding parishes had hastened to venerate him, to kiss his hand and to receive his blessing. The grief of his venerable blind cousin was indeed pitiful. The Bishop's last words in Quebec when he embarked on the westbound train were, "Pray for me, my friends. I am going back to die among my dear Indians, whom I have loved so much."

His active life was over; his journeyings ended. He lingered some months. During that time he reviewed his life preparatory to giving an account of his stewardship to his Lord. Was his memory defective, or was it buried under the pall of humility? He found nothing in his thirty-four years of ministry worthy of God's consideration. "I have done nothing," he concluded sadly. Then he remembered one thing only, one from the Book of Life where the recording angels had entered good and noble deeds by the hundreds. "Yes," he mused, "I have done one good thing. I have brought the Sisters of St. Ann into my diocese." Are the Sisters of St. Ann entitled to this exalted position and worthy of the unique esteem of their Chief Pastor?

When Bishop Demers, facing eternity, uttered these words concerning them, thirteen years had passed since he had introduced the Sisters into his diocese. In that time they had three times enlarged the circle of their activities in Victoria. They had doubled their thirty-foot log cabin; then, they had built a two-story brick convent on View Street; and they had begun the three-story, mansard roof nucleus of the present

Academy on Humboldt Street. They had bought four hundred acres of government lands on which they had opened an Indian residential school at Quamichan for the native girls of the Island. The next year, 1864, they started a day and boarding school in New Westminster. In 1868, they became helpers to the Oblate Fathers in the management of an Indian Mission School on the Fraser River. While the original purpose of the Cowichan foundation has undergone two changes, these three pioneer institutions are still carrying on.

Twenty-two Sisters had come from the eastern to the western coast to engage in missionary work; eighteen had traveled via the Isthmus of Panama; four across the continent by the Southern Pacific Railway, through Chicago, Ogden, and San Francisco. The Sisters had taught the children of the ever-increasing white population. This had not entered into the original purpose of their coming to Victoria, which as Bishop Demers had pointed out was to instruct the half-breed children of French Canadians. But even before their first arrival, while Bishop Demers was on his eastern trip seeking helpers, gold findings at the confluence of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers had made Victoria a city of thirty thousand tents. When the gold proved a disappointment, many of its seekers decided to remain in the province; a large percentage located in Victoria. This broadened the educational program of the Sisters.

From the first days the Sisters conducted an orphanage on a parallel with the boarding school. Many of the children of whom it was composed were imposed on the Sisters through false pretences. A man would bring his half-breed child, pay a month or so in advance, or merely promise payment, and that would be the last heard of him. The register shows that some of these charges remained with the Sisters ten, even fifteen years. The Sisters were reluctant to let them go, unprotected, into the wide world.

For a while the Sisters had a school for colored children. This, however, was rather short lived, for the parents took offence that these pupils were not on a par with the whites and

half-breeds. The Sisters also had a nursery for little boys, kept separate from that of the girls. In fine, the Sisters embraced every benevolent work that presented itself. It is easy to read between the lines that this was charity pure and simple; especially was this the case with the Indian wards.

And still the work progressed, and no applicant, Kanaka, Indian, Chinese or any other class, was refused food, shelter or raiment under the convent roof. People looking on wondered. They were sure the Sisters had great incomes from somewhere. Some one asked Doctor Sebastian Helmeken where the Sisters got their funds. He answered, "By digging and washing."

All these years the Sisters had been visiting and nursing the sick in their homes, and as much as possible caring for them under the convent roof. They also laid out the dead in those days when funeral parlors were unknown.

As early as 1864 it was the wish of Bishop Demers to have a hospital. There was a notice in the daily press to the effect that, "not to be outdone in benevolence," he had taken active steps to establish a hospital for the use of all classes and creeds, and had given a site for the building on his property on Collinson Street.

Owing to his extensive travels, including the two journeys to Europe, nothing substantial and permanent was accomplished towards this charitable cause till 1876 when St. Joseph's Hospital opened wide its doors, never to close them to the sick and suffering. The Sisters of St. Ann had undertaken the building and the establishing of the first brick unit which stands as a part of the extensive hospital of today.

The issue of the first operation in the new hospital, successfully performed in a small room on an ordinary table, was a cause for hushed wonder and suspense among Victoria citizens. From that day of primitive surgery to the present with eighteen operations per day in a suite of seven operating rooms, and a departmental X-ray equipment, St. Joseph's has kept pace with modern progress. It sends its trained Sister and secular nurses to operate hospitals in Juneau, Alaska; Dawson, Yukon Territory; Campbell River, Vancouver Island; Smithers, in

mid-north British Columbia; and the Mission hospital connected with Holy Cross, Alaska.

Did the dying eyes of Bishop Demers, illumined with the vision of the future, see this expansion of his holy desires? Did he see also the extension of education for which he had brought the Sisters into his diocese? Did he see the seventeen schools in British Columbia, in Alaska and the Yukon, that have taken their source from the thirty by fifteen foot log cabin classroom, with its seats made of boards supported by packing cases? The Bishop's work among his beloved Indians is carried on with a maternal solicitude, which, never wearying, must reach and delight him within the happy portals beyond our ken. The Sisters of St. Ann are engaged in five residential Indian Schools: Kuper Island, Mission City and Kamloops in British Columbia; Holy Cross and Pius X Mission, Skagway, in Alaska; and a day school, St. Peter Claver Mission, Nulato, Alaska.

One of the great concerns of the bishops of Victoria has been to provide Catholic education for boys. Before the coming of the Clercs of St. Viateur in 1858, Bishop Demers had a Catholic layman teaching in a small house near the clergy residence. The Clercs took up the work, as teaching is a part of their ministry, but, as has been said, they were recalled to a more far-reaching, populous field.

In 1863 the Oblates of Mary Immaculate added teaching to their missionary labors in Victoria. They built a two-story brick house on the corner of Pandora and Vancouver Streets. The first floor of this building was reserved for classrooms; the second, for the living rooms of the Fathers and for their community chapel. The building was blessed August 25, Feast of St. Louis, the patron saint of Father Louis D'Herbomez, Superior of the Oblates in the Colony, and was named St. Louis College. Its right to being called a college is justified by the ambition of its first clerical professors who aimed at giving college education.

The language of the great fur land was French Canadian. Even the Scotch traders and factors, who were in equal, or per-



haps in greater numbers than the French in the territory, spoke French. It became obvious in the early sixties, however, that cultured English was to supersede the French. Bishop Demers then applied for English teachers. The response came in such capable instructors as Father McGuckin, O.M.I., and Brothers Allan and MacStay of the same Order.

When the diocese of New Westminster was formed on the mainland, and placed under the episcopal jurisdiction of the Oblates, the members of the Order concentrated their forces in that field. On their departure Bishop Demers bought St. Louis College for the sum of ten thousand dollars, and in 1866 the diocesan clergy became the teachers there.

Such great priests as Reverend Fathers J. J. Jonckau, A. J. Brabant, A. J. Van Nevel, and Right Reverend Monsignor Leterme taught there the three "R's" humbly and earnestly. The latter, who was principal at St. Louis College for sixteen years, had been Cardinal Mercier's "most brilliant" student in the Louvain College. That he was an ambitious scholar we know from the fact that he asked Bishop Seghers for an extra year in Louvain that he might study Hebrew before coming to the diocese. Bishop Seghers said of this request, "I would have been too glad myself of such an opportunity to deny it to him."

Monsignor Leterme stands out in the memory of those who knew him as the holy priest who always carried his beads in his hands. Among his Christmas gifts was often a goodly number of pairs of gloves. In his quiet way he would say, "Give me mittens so that I can use my fingers more freely to say the beads as I walk along."

One day a Sister in the kindergarten class was telling her pupils about the Pope. After quite an explanation she asked, "Who knows the name of Our Holy Father?" One bright little child answered radiantly, "Father Leterme."

Yes, that was the name by which he was known in Catholic homes, "the holy Father."

"The Catholic Church is one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

*Holy* in its doctrine, and the *number* of the *faithful* who are eminent for the sanctity of their lives.”

NOTE: St. Louis College has been for the past twenty-five years under the direction of the Christian Brothers of Ireland whose zealous work is bearing fruit in the Catholic education of boys in Victoria. This year, 1939, St. Louis College celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII

---

### CHRIST'S HERALD ENDS HIS COURSE

WHEN Bishop Demers, on his return voyage from attending the Vatican Council in Rome, stopped in his native parish in Quebec, October, 1870, he was little able to undertake the remainder of the trip to Victoria. But, accustomed to listen to the call of duty rather than to that of nature, he boarded the Montreal train bound for San Francisco. In San Francisco he remained only one night. Two weeks later, November 2d, he arrived in his episcopal city, weak, sick, dropsical and with the pain in his side, the result of the accident in France, aggravated. He was certain that he had come home to die. His priests were forced to share his apprehensions.

On New Year's Day he suffered a paralytic stroke which affected his left side and deprived him of the power of speech, but not of consciousness. He hung between life and death for several days. However, to the great joy of all, he recovered sufficiently to say Mass; he even expressed the desire to visit his dear Cowichan Indians. In those days Cowichan was also the health resort of the clergy, so to Cowichan the Bishop went. A complete cure was expected. But alas, after a few days, the Bishop was seized with a second stroke and he had to be taken back to Victoria.

The mission priest and ten young, vigorous Indians rowed the Bishop to Victoria, in the best canoe to be had. All hope of recovery was now gone. The Bishop lingered five months. The patience and resignation with which the prelate bore his sufferings were a subject of profound edification to everyone. The somewhat fiery, impetuous character of the missionary disappeared altogether; nature ceded completely to grace; not a murmur, not a complaint escaped the lips of the patient whose

whole life might be called a real martyrdom. At three o'clock on the morning of July 28, 1871, after repeated invocations to Jesus, Mary, Joseph, to Good St. Ann and to his Angel Guardian, the first Bishop of Vancouver Island rendered his soul to his Creator.

Next morning the *Victoria Daily Colonist* had the following beautiful editorial: "The solemn tolling of the Catholic Cathedral bell at an early hour yesterday morning apprised the people of Victoria that another soul had winged its flight to Heaven. As the day wore on and it became known that good Bishop Demers was dead, there was a universal expression of regret from all classes and creeds. The life and works of Right Reverend Modeste Demers, R.C. Bishop of Vancouver Island, are such as to render the incident of his death deserving of something more than passing notice.

"A native of Quebec, Canada, he entered the priesthood in 1836, and the following year left Canada for this coast, in company with Archbishop Blanchet, crossing the country overland as best they could at that early period. Arriving in Oregon in 1838, the zealous apostle entered upon the active and arduous work of a Christian missionary, in the wilds of the North Pacific, a work which he continued with unabated zeal to the time of his last illness.

"Only those who came to this coast in these early days can form anything like an adequate idea of what he had to suffer and endure. In perils by sea, in perils by land, in perils among savage tribes, in perils among wild beasts, in perils among his own countrymen, he did not count his life dear to him, so that he might promote the great work to which he had devoted himself. Nor were his labors barren of results, for, go where you will in the North Pacific, the fruits of these many years of incessant toil will be seen.

"There is scarcely a rood of ground which he has not trod; there is not an Indian village which he has not visited; there is not a white settlement in which he has not provided the ordinances of the Church.

"The late Bishop was not only a devoted and successful



missionary, but a man and neighbor. He was the most lovable of men. However others may differ from him in matters of faith, none could differ from him as a man. He was, indeed, a devoted Christian and an exemplary man, and during the twenty-four years that he occupied the exalted position of Bishop, his humility never forsook him, as his zeal never flagged.

"Consecrated Bishop of Vancouver Island, November 30th, 1847, he has faithfully discharged the obligations he had assumed. The poor and needy, the broken in spirit as well as in fortune, ever found the Bishop a wise counselor and a kind friend. In the early days of the settlement of the Colony, when the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company experienced great trouble in dealing with the then numerous and savage Indian tribes, Bishop Demers who was a great favorite among them, always assisted by his advice and counsel in preventing an outbreak.

"He established Catholic missions at various points on the island and on the mainland, and frequently made long trips in the interior to convert the heathen. All early residents will readily recall to mind his happy, handsome face, true index of the peace of mind that reigned within, his urbanity and kind affectionate manner.

"His last moments were free from pain and he fell calmly and peacefully into his last sleep. During his illness he frequently expressed a desire to see and converse with Sir James Douglas, who was often found at his bedside."

Father Morice endorses the above eulogies of the Victoria press and says, "Bishop Demers was a zealous missionary and a prelate, meek and humble of heart. . . . He was regretted by his flock who had not always understood him, and by Protestants who had not spared their efforts to thwart him."

Truly, next to Archbishop Blanchet, with whom Bishop Demers was soul in soul in missionary companionship, the Bishop of Victoria held Sir James Douglas in bonds of sincerest friendship. This harmony of heart and mind between the leaders of the Church and of the State in the two Crown colonies of

British Columbia, began at Fort Vancouver, November 25, 1838, when Douglas, then Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, came to the shore to welcome Fathers Blanchet and Demers arriving at the end of their transcontinental journey.

The Chief Factor, then acting governor of the western fur land, with headquarters in Fort Vancouver, was a religious member of the Church of England, but he extended the hospitality of the Fort, indefinitely, to the two missionaries. They came and went as they pleased, freely exercising their apostolate for several months, until they were able to locate and house themselves in their own home.

It was with Sir James Douglas and at his invitation that Father Bolduc sailed on the expedition of 1843 when the former opened the Fort in Victoria. Whether from attraction for Bishop Demers, before as well as after his episcopal consecration, or through admiration for the doctrine he preached, Sir James Douglas preferred to hear the Bishop at Catholic services than to attend services in his own church. Nevertheless, there is not the least indication that he ever intended changing from the creed in which he was born. When he was governor of British Columbia he extended every courtesy within his power to the Bishop. He gave him all the credit he needed, he enclosed the Bishop's outgoing and incoming mail with his own. The night sentinel who paced up and down before his residence exercised the same vigilance as well over the Bishop's house.

These may be set down as official favors, but there were traits which made these two great men most congenial companions. They could converse in cultured French. Sir James Douglas had learned it in boyhood from an exiled French nobleman, and all through life he spoke the language with a pure accent. Bishop Demers always retained the perfection of classic French acquired in the Seminary. On one of his European journeys he was called upon to deliver a masterly discourse at the third Congress at Malines. Both were adepts in the use of the various Indian languages spoken in the west which each had mastered with astonishing facility. Both loved

and understood the Indian mentality, while the savages with their gift of intuition grasped the sympathies of these spiritual and temporal rulers.

It may be that Bishop Demers succeeded through appeal to the heart; Sir James, through material benefits. The following is an example of the latter: Sir James Douglas was at his office desk one morning when someone came in quite excitedly and said, "Sir, the Indians are here in great numbers, clamoring and menacing trouble. We cannot pacify them. Will you come?" Sir Douglas merely turned his head, and said, "Give them molasses," and went on writing. The official understood. The men in the fort began to throw articles from the store. The natives scrambled for them. The trouble was over.

One of the greatest difficulties Sir Douglas had to meet was the torrent of people that stopped in Victoria in 1858 to outfit for the Thompson-Fraser gold rush. He said, "We shall have trouble on our hands."

Fortunately, owing to his usual tact and peaceful measures, nothing serious happened. As a precautionary measure he called out the militia. Then he considered that in a crowd there are only a comparatively few breeders of tumult; the majority are peace abiding. He met the assembled men in an outdoor meeting and began his address with the words, "There is gold in the province, and it is for you men to find it." The words acted like magic. They became a slogan.

These two greatest men in the Colony presented an admirable pair wherever they appeared together on the street, in the courts, in each other's homes. Their contrasts served to show each other to advantage. Sir Douglas was six feet and more in height, erect, muscular, rather slow, but natural and graceful. Bishop Demers was middle-height, keen-eyed, with hair slightly curly, animated, ardent and high-spirited notwithstanding his fatigue and infirmities. He had a heart of gold, and the sensitiveness of a child. Kind, generous, affable, his frankness could brook no dissimulation. In his humility he did not see the good he did. He often repeated, "What am I doing for Thee, O my God?" His penetration was keen; his memory most

happy, his judgment sure. Imagine such a temperament, such a character, such a heart in the service of God and you will have a faint idea of the wonders he achieved. Everywhere, and always, in the most difficult situations, as in the easier, he was a considerate and amiable companion, cheery and cordially attached to his friends. He bore a special interest for his relatives and his heart, inflamed with his love of God, burned for the salvation of his brothers. Here is an extract from a letter to his cousin Rev. M. Desrochers, dated 1865:

"I am happy to hear there are so many religious vocations in the family. I congratulate your brother on already having two daughters in the shadow of the cloister away from a corrupt and corruptible world. Ah, how our good, old grandmother rejoices—if anything can add to her happiness in heaven—to see so great a number of her descendants embrace the sacerdotal and religious life.

"Oh, yes! without doubt she sees her prayers answered beyond her hopes, because you know she prayed constantly that there might be priests in the family. You know, moreover, that the extremities of her fingers were hardened from saying the beads for this intention. However, though she must have been carried to heaven by the souls she delivered from Purgatory, for whom she had so many masses said—it was her great devotion—I give her a place with my other ancestors, in my memento at daily Mass. What more just? Oh, how good were those people of the good old times. How simple, and robust their faith. Alas, we must admit that it is not so for a great many in this age of light and material progress."

In another letter to the same in 1857, he foretold a fact which at the time seemed the dream of a visionary: "Wait a while," he says, "and we shall have the pleasure of seeing the Rocky Mountains crossed by iron rails, and then, we shall not only have the happiness of more frequent correspondence, but the sweet satisfaction of meeting here below."

"How much the heart of this great patriot, this true friend of his country, would have thrilled," says one of his biographers, "if he could have seen the annexation of British Colum-



bia in the Federation of Canada. But God, who willed to let him have the full merit of the sacrifices he had taken upon himself for love of Him, hastened to withdraw him from this valley of tears, just when the skies were becoming more serene, and the commodities of life more accessible."

Bishop Demers proved so tactful in dealing with the different Indian tribes, and the members of the religious denominations with whom his life was cast, that he lived esteemed, honored and in good accord with one and all.

One cannot too much admire his intelligence in conducting affairs. If there was an evil to redress, he did not act with precipitate zeal that retards rather than helps a cause. He took time to weigh before God the best means to employ, and was careful not to compromise the case by imprudent words or action. He chose with caution the moment to speak, or act, "so as," he said, "not to commit faults in opposing faults." And so it was that his tireless, charitable activity was none the less productive of results because of the prudence which controlled it. If there was a difficulty to solve, he studied it with the patience of reflection, and always found a solid and judicious solution. From all parts people had recourse to him. They wanted his advice in all important matters. They looked upon him as a competent judge. This faculty was clearly manifest in his work of readjusting marriages, of settling the numberless disagreements between tribe and tribe; of establishing better understanding in domestic circles.

"I have always admired," says a witness of his life, "the greatness and the excellence of his prudence, which made all his works converge to the greater glory of God, the conversion of souls, the exaltation of faith and the good government of his diocese. It was a prudence which had its source in the spirit of God. It employed charitable and benignant means with great interior and exterior peace, and in the midst of his continual occupations was never hurried nor troubled."

One would have thought that he read souls, especially those of the Indians, like a book under the open sky. His letters show his prudence in the direction of souls, and the address

with which he used language and advice suited to circumstance and character.

It is impossible to say which of the virtues in the life of Bishop Demers, the great missionary, shone with greatest luster. Was it prudence, humility, faith, hope, trust in God, conformity to the Divine Will, meekness, patience, zeal, equanimity of soul? We have seen them all equally exercised in this sketch of his life. But which stands out pre-eminently?

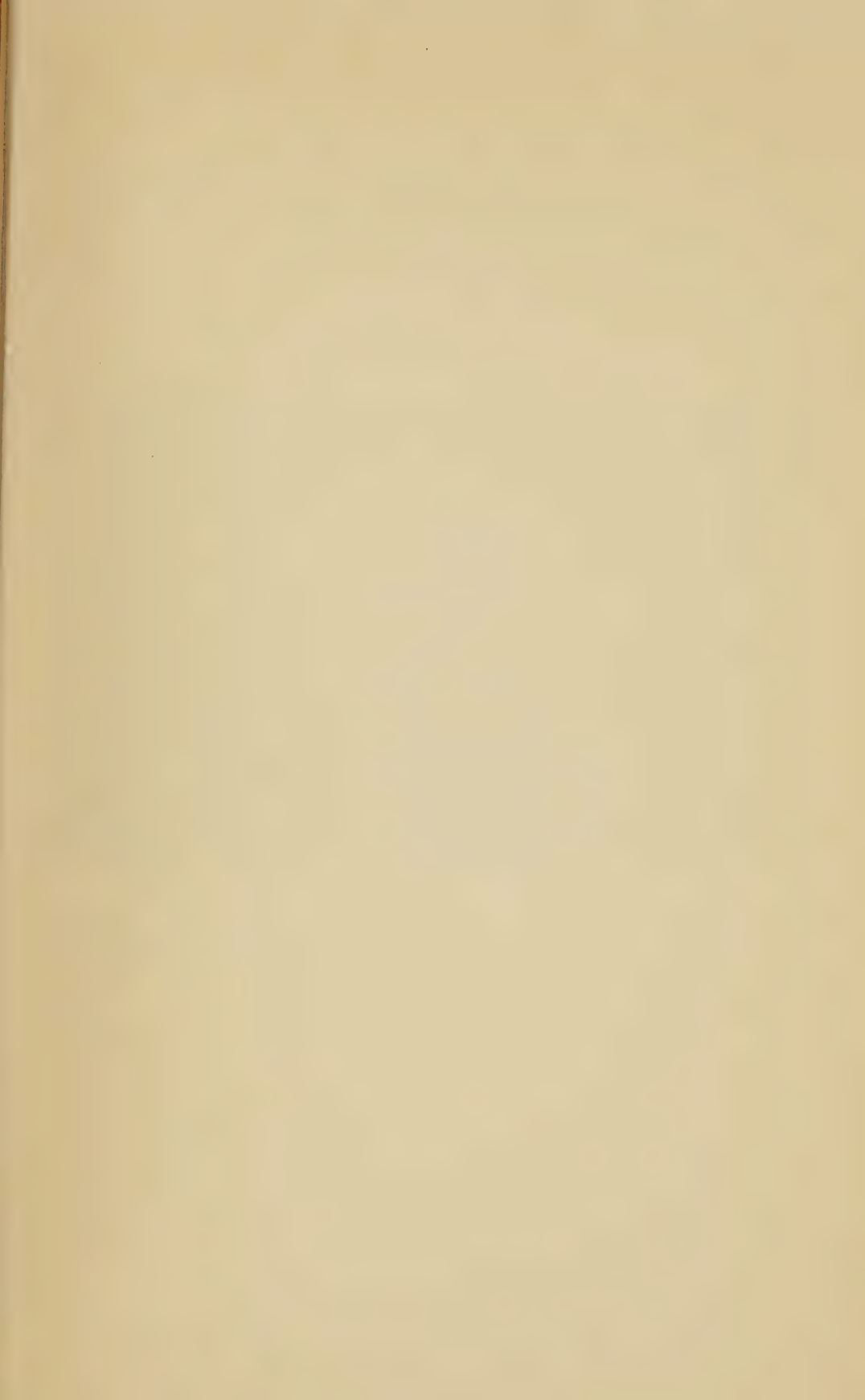
The answer is in the Book of Life.

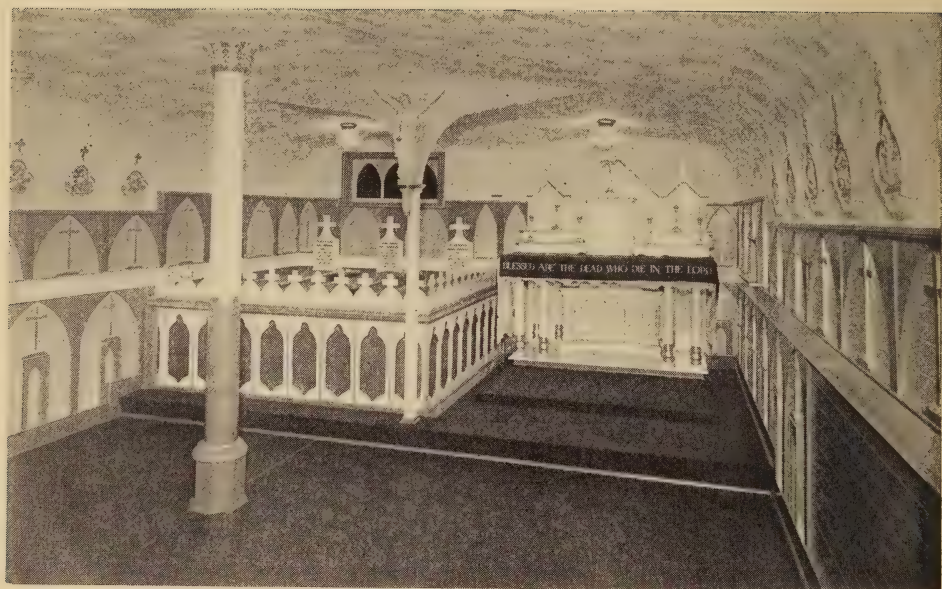
On this centenary which commemorates the arrival of the grand Apostle of British Columbia to this North-West Pacific, it is but just to consider the result of his stupendous labor in this province.

From the diocese of Victoria established on this western coast Island of Vancouver, around a fort doomed to a short existence, have evolved the diocese of Vancouver on the mainland, a transfer from that of New Westminster; the diocese of Nelson; Vicariate Apostolic Alaska Territory; Vicariate Apostolic of the Yukon and Prince Rupert. The diocese of Victoria so extensive in territory, so sparse in population, so destitute in resources when Bishop Demers took possession of it eighty-six years ago, now in its narrowed compass of Vancouver Island resounds the divine praises through 28 churches, 47 missions, 29 priests, 8 religious orders and 12 schools.<sup>1</sup>

A population of 16,642 Catholics comes on this occasion to the crypt in St. Andrew's Cathedral, where rest the hallowed remains of Modeste Demers, and there prostrate on the tomb of the glorious Bishop, pays tender homage to him who is in the foremost ranks of the Apostles of the Catholic Church in North America.

<sup>1</sup> *Official Catholic Directory*, 1938.





MEMORIAL CRYPT, ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL—1938

Here repose the venerated remains of Most Reverend Modeste Demers,  
First Bishop of Victoria, Most Reverend Charles John Seghers, and Very  
Reverend John J. Jonckau



# Foundation Stones

Demers, Seghers, Jonckau

## *A Tribute*



*"Be you also as living stones  
built up, a spiritual edifice."*

I. St. Peter ii, 5.

*"Who trust in the Lord shall share in the  
strength of the Rock which is Christ."*

St. Bruno.



### BISHOP DEMERS.

Hewn from the quarries of God's faith and love,  
O corner-stone of this Victoria See,  
Fair to behold and firm on which to build,  
O stone of Christ, we kneel and honor thee!

### BISHOP SEGHERS.

O ruddy stone!—bedewed with martyr-blood,  
More priceless far than all Alaska's gold!  
In thy deep veinings trace we God's own plan  
To ransom souls with zeal and love untold!

### FATHER JONCKAU.

Secure and strong to bear the weight of care,  
O hidden stone!—so precious in God's sight,  
A monument of duty nobly done,  
Resplendent dost thou shine in Heaven's light.



### DEDICATION.

Foundation stones!—in this Memorial shrine  
Victoria honors heavenly wisdom rare  
Which built not on the fleeting sands of Time  
The work of God on this, our Island fair!

*"Miriam," S.S.A.*

Dedication of the Memorial Chapel,  
St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria, B. C.,  
Sunday, February 20, 1938.

## SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

	PAGE
Introductory	
St. John, XXI, 17 . . . . .	vii
Samuel, III, 10 . . . . .	vii
Isaias, VI, 8 . . . . .	vii
St. Paul, 2nd to Corinthians, IV, 8 . . . . .	vii
1st to Corinthians, IV, 11, 12, 13 . . . . .	viii
2nd to Corinthians, X, 10 . . . . .	viii
1st to Corinthians, II, 3 . . . . .	ix
Chapter I: St. Luke, I, 76 . . . . .	7
Ecclesiasticus, VI, 16 . . . . .	10
St. Matthew, XI, 30 . . . . .	11
Chapter II: St. Matthew, XX, 16 . . . . .	18
St. Matthew, X, 37, 38 . . . . .	20
Chapter IV: St. Luke, XI, 49, 50 . . . . .	43
Chapter VI: Isaias, LII, 7 . . . . .	67
Chapter VII: St. Matthew, XXVIII, 19 . . . . .	79
Chapter XI: St. Matthew, XIII, 47, 48 . . . . .	116
Chapter XV: St. Luke, IX, 5 . . . . .	170
Chapter XVI: St. Mark, XVI, 15 . . . . .	173
Chapter XVII: Daniel, XII, 3 . . . . .	202
Chapter XVIII: St. Matthew, VI, 26 . . . . .	203

## SOURCES

- Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon*, Archbishop  
F. N. Blanchet.
- Fragments de l'Histoire de St. Nicholas*, Etienne Theodore Paquet.
- The Honorable Company*, Douglas MacKay.
- History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, Rev. A. G.  
Morice, O.M.I.
- Makers of Canada*, Vol. VIII, The Rev. George Bryce, D.D.
- Makers of Canada*, Vol. XX, R. H. Coats and R. E. Gosnell.
- Mgr. Grandin*, R. P. E. Jonquet, O.M.I.
- Catholic History of Oregon*, Most Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara.
- Mid Snow and Ice*, Rev. P. Duchaussois, O.M.I.
- Mère Marie of the Ursulines*, Agnes Repplier.

## INDEX

- Alaska, 81  
 Alexander, A. C., 118  
 Alexandria, Fort, 114, 115, 117, 121  
 Algonquins, The, 21  
 Althoff, Rev. John, 98, 246, 247, 248  
 Ann, Sisters of St., 50, 51, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, 213-214, 244, 255, 257  
 Ann's College, St., 18  
 Assiniboine, Fort, 58  
 Athabaska River, 56  
 Atnan Indians, 118-120  
 Augustine, St., 3  
  
 Baldoon, 37  
 Beaudry, Rev. 203  
 Bezeau, J., 11  
 Big Joe, Chief, 187, 188  
 Blackfeet, The, 17, 156  
 Blanchet, Archbishop F. N., 48, 49, 50, 63, 73, 83, 100, 139-150  
 Boat Encampment, 61  
 Boniface, St., 24, 52, 53, 158  
 Bourke, Rev. Charles, 38  
 Brabant, Rev. August, 235, 236, 237, 238  
 Brown, Mr., 95  
 Burnett, Hon. Peter H., 127, 128  
  
 Calapocia Indians, 67  
 Canadian Martyrs, The, 4  
 Carleton, Fort, 57, 156  
 Carrier Indians, 115  
 Cascade Indians, 102  
 Caughnawaga, 46  
 Cayuse Indians, 67  
 Celestine I, Pope, St., 3  
 Champlain, Samuel de, 4-21, 91  
 Chesterfield Inlet, 90  
 Chinook Indians, 67, 93, 94  
 Clatsop Indians, 67  
 Clearwater River, 33  
 Clercs of St. Viateur, 203, 258  
 Columbia, 45  
 Columbia River, 50  
  
 Colville, 64, 76, 95, 96  
 Colville, Chief, 103  
 Cowichan Indians, 180, 186, 191  
 Cowlitz, 44, 53, 101, 127  
 Cowlitz River, 43  
 Crees, The, 17  
  
 Dalles of the Dead, 62  
 Delorme, Rev. B., 142  
 Demers, Bishop Modeste, 4, 6, 7, 9-16, 24, 27-31, 48, 53, 62, 64, 70, 74, 75, 107, 111, 114, 133-138, 146, 148, 149, 151-170, 174, 175, 180, 181, 182, 191, 252, 253, 254, 262-269  
 Denny, Arthur A., 174  
 Desrochers, Rev. B., 9-11  
 Donckele, Rev. Gustave, 242, 243, 244, 245  
 Douglas, Fort, 40  
 Douglas, Sir James, 65, 66, 130, 177, 194, 204, 263, 264, 265  
 Dumoulin, Rev. S. N., 24, 40  
  
 Edmonton, 76  
 Edward Island, Prince, 37  
 England, 3  
 Eussen, Rev. Louis, 248, 249, 250, 251  
  
 Flathead Indians, 67  
 France, 3, 4  
 Fraser Indians, 109  
 Fraser, Simon, 176, 177  
 French River, 52, 116, 179  
 Fuller, John, 220, 221  
  
 Garry, Nicholas, 32-33  
 George, Fort, 104  
 Gibbons, Cardinal, 248  
 Gordon, William, 50  
 Grandidier, O.M.I., Father, 197  
 Grand Portage, 23, 26, 33  
 Great Northwest Company, 23  
 Great Slave Lakes, 60  
 Gregory I, Pope, St., 3

- Hargrave, Chief Trader, 50, 52  
 Harkely, Chief, 102  
 Harmon, Daniel W., 117  
 Hebrides, 38  
 Henry House, 56  
 Hesquiat Indians, 235, 236  
 Howes, Hon. Benjamin, 168  
 Hudson Bay, 24, 90  
 Hudson's Bay Company, 23-35, 41, 44,  
     50, 55, 60, 80, 178  
 Hughes, Archbishop, 170  
 Hunt, Captain, 91  
 Huron Lake, 4, 21-23  
  
 Iroquois, The, 4, 21, 91, 106  
  
 Janteka Indians, 187  
 Jasper House, 58  
 Jonckau, Father, 219-221, 234, 235,  
     242, 269  
  
 Kaministiquia River, 23  
 Kamloops, 121  
 Kanaka Indians, 106  
 Keiinsno, Chief, 104  
 Kennedy, Governor A. J., 197  
 Kitson, Mr., 84  
 Klalam Indians, 89  
 Klickitat Indians, 67  
 Kootenay Indians, 195  
  
 Lachine, 21, 22, 44  
 Lacombe, Father, 194  
 Lacroix, Lake, 4  
 Langley, 107, 188  
 Laut, Agnes C., 50  
 Laval, Bishop, 4-8  
 Lejeune, O.M.I., Father, 198  
 Le Lanier, Rev. Pierre M., 167  
 Lemmens, Bishop John Nicholas, 215,  
     222-227  
 Leo XIII, Pope, 219  
 Leroy, Rev. Joseph Hubert, 239  
 Leterme, Rt. Rev. Monsgr., 259  
 Lewis Islands, 27  
 Lootens, Rev. Louis, 167  
 Louis, Lake St., 22  
 Louvain, 215, 223, 233, 239, 259  
  
 MacDonnell, Capt. Miles, 38, 39  
 Mainville, Miss Mary, 210  
 Mandart, Rev. Joseph, 231, 232  
  
 Manitoba, 24, 39  
 Mary Angele, Sr. S.S.A., 206, 208, 211  
 Mary Bonsecours, Sr. S.S.A., 211  
 Mary Conception, Sr. S.S.A., 206  
 Mary Lumena, Sr. S.S.A., 206, 208  
 Mary of the Sacred Heart, Sr. S.S.A.,  
     206  
 Mary Providence, Sr. S.S.A., 211, 212,  
     214  
 Mary's Mission, St., 200  
 Matlahaw, Chief, 236, 237  
 Mattawa, 23  
 McLoughlin, Dr. John, 41, 42, 60, 124,  
     125, 126, 128, 129, 138  
 Medicine Man, The, 97, 98  
 Michaud, Charles, 203, 205  
 Michigan Lake, 23  
 Molalba Indians, 67  
 Montreal, 21, 22, 26, 33  
 Moore, Thomas, 28  
  
 Nanaimo, 188, 189, 191, 250  
 Nanaimook Indians, 188, 190  
 Netlam, Chief, 86, 89, 103  
 New Caledonia, 41, 55, 58, 120, 124,  
     153, 169, 176  
 Nez-Percés Indians, 67  
 Nicholas, St., 5, 9, 19, 162  
 Nicolaye, Rev. Joseph, 239, 240, 241,  
     242  
 Nipissing, Lake, 4, 23  
 Nisqually, 74, 83, 131  
 Nobili, S.J., Father, 194  
 Northwest Fur Co., 38, 55  
 Norway House, 46, 55  
  
 Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 90, 194,  
     198, 230, 231, 258, 259  
 Ogden, Peter S., 95, 111, 112, 116  
 Okanagan, 78, 122  
 Okanagan Indians, 67  
 Ontario, Lake, 4  
 Oregon, 36, 41, 61, 130, 176, 191  
 Orkney Islands, 27  
 Ottawa River, 23  
  
 Pambrum, Mr., 77  
 Parent, Rev. Anthony, 101  
 Patrick, St., 3  
 Paul, Jose, 27  
 Plessis, Bishop, 12  
 Poh-Poh, Chief, 103  
 Provencher, Bishop, 17-24, 40, 41, 43,  
     48, 158



- Radisson, Pierre Esprit, 80  
 Rainy Lake, 24, 33  
 Rainy River, 52  
 Red River, 37, 38, 158  
 Red River Settlement, 17-36, 39  
 Rondeault, Rev. Peter, 196, 203, 228-229, 242  
 Rowand, John, 56, 57  
 Rupert's Land, 37, 45  
  
 Schomisk, Chief, 188  
 Scott, General Winfield, 207  
 Seghers, Archbishop C.J., 145, 205, 215-222, 253, 254, 269  
 Selkirk, Lord, 37, 38, 39  
 Signay, Bishop, 15-17, 48, 49  
 Simco, Lake, 4  
 Simpson, Sir George, 28, 36, 44, 45, 46, 50, 56, 60, 81  
 Sioux, the, 17  
 Skadjat Indians, 105  
 Small, Patrick, 57  
 Smet, S.J., Father de, 92  
 Snowhomish, Chief, 102  
 Spokane Indians, 67  
 Superior, Lake, 23  
  
 Tamakoon, Chief, 102  
 Tamanwas, the, or Medicine Man, 97-98  
 Thérèse of Lisieux, St., 90, 160  
  
 Thompson, Fort, 114  
 Three Rivers, 80  
 Tillamook Indians, 67  
 Tiministiquia River, 57  
 Trois Pistoles, 16-18  
 Tslalakum, Chief, 81, 85, 89, 102, 104  
 Turquetil, O.M.I., Bishop, 90  
 Tzouhalem, Chief, 183  
  
 Vancouver, Fort, 50, 65, 69, 109  
 Vancouver Island, 44, 62, 169, 173, 175, 248  
 Vary, Rev., 203  
 Victoria, 176, 179  
  
 Walla Walla, 77  
 Walla-Walla Indians, 67  
 Wascopam Indians, 67  
 Whidby Island, 81, 85, 89, 102  
 Wilkes, Commodore, U.S.E.E., 87, 124  
 Willamette Valley, 41, 42, 53, 71, 127  
 William, Fort, 33  
 Winnipeg, Lake, 46-52  
 Winnipeg River, 24  
 Woods, Lake of the, 24  
 Wrangell, 247  
  
 Yale, Mr., 106  
 York Factory, 22, 46  
 Yougleta Indians, 104, 105, 190

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sister Mary Theodore, S.S.A., was born November 30, 1856, at Oswego, New York. As a resident student at St. Ann's Convent, Lachine, Quebec, she was present at a reception held in honor of Most Reverend Modeste Demers, Bishop of Victoria, when he passed through Montreal returning to Victoria from his last visit to Europe. Two years later she became a member of the Order of the Sisters of St. Ann, at the Motherhouse, Lachine. In 1878 Sister came to Vancouver Island, travelling via the Southern Pacific to San Francisco and then up the coast, by steamboat and by rail, to Victoria. Sister Mary Theodore has spent the greater part of her religious life in the city of Victoria, with short periods at Duncan, Nanaimo, Juneau and Vancouver, and so has had occasion to meet every Bishop of Victoria and to have had personal acquaintance with everyone of the Heralds of Christ the King who live again in this historical pageant of early missionary days in the Pacific Northwest.

In her declining years, at the Provincial House of the Sisters of St. Ann, Victoria, B.C., Sister Mary Theodore is an authority on missionary lore and has contributed historical articles to many magazines. She has also written *A Chaplet of Years*, *Pioneer Nuns of British Columbia*, *Laurels for St. Ann*, and *The Seal of the Cross*.





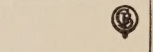




## Date Due

1947

FACULTY







BX1403 .M39  
Heralds of Christ, the King; missionary

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00019 5489